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BY LORD GORELL.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HER husband's name was as utterly unexpected to Cecilia as his appearance earlier that evening had been. She drew herself up erect, spots of colour appeared swiftly on each of her pale cheeks, and she glanced about hurriedly, seeking escape. Escape, however, there was none: the butler closed the door, the assembled party broke off their chatter, all turned to the new-comer—she was trapped.

Dimly through her distress she heard Lady Wraybourne saying, 'Ah, John, it's nice of you to come back again at such short notice,' and his light and friendly answer, 'Is it likely I would stand on ceremony with you, and after such an interval?' And then she heard him being introduced to Mrs. Corbillion and Miss Marchant. The next moment her heart thumped horribly in her throat: what was it that was being said? She heard Mr. Standish,

'How are you, my dear fellow? Glad to see you looking so well.'

And her husband's answer, 'I am well, thanks, and you?'

'Much better. But where's your wife? Haven't you brought her?'

'No—' slowly and coolly as though measuring liquid he spoke—
'I haven't actually done that.'

Was he deliberately tantalizing her, dribbling out half-knowledge? Had he a wife, besides her unacknowledged self? Once again he had come alone: he was aiming, Cecilia was sure, past his unconscious listeners, to the rigid and terribly conscious girl in the background. Now Mr. Standish was replying: Cecilia strained to catch not merely each word but every inflexion of each word.

'That's too bad. We're most anxious to see her: we were so sorry to miss the wedding.'

Ah! Cecilia could breathe again, though every breath hurt her.

The next moment John Harland stood by her side. 'Good evening, Miss Brooke.'

She mastered her disturbance by a great effort sufficiently to reply conventionally, and then, a sense of anger at the ease of his self-assurance coming to her rescue, she lifted her eyes firmly to his, and said with a quietness that surprised her,

'I did not expect to see you again, Sir John.'

The reverberations of the gong and the throwing open of the door by the butler cut across the tensify of the moment.

'We won't be formal,' said Lady Wraybourne. 'Go on all of you, and I'll follow. Cecilia, my dear, give me your arm.'

Obediently and gratefully Cecilia went across to her: she had never known Lady Wraybourne accept of help before, still less ask for it; but she felt it was the old lady's way of showing that she was not angry with her. At any rate, whatever the reason, it was the most welcome of commands. She followed with Lady Wraybourne slowly down the stairs, and by the time they gained the dining-room she was mistress of her stirred emotions. How dared he return like this? And without a trace either of shame or remembrance. She was royally angry, and more beautiful than she had ever been.

Her anger did not abate when she found that her place at table was next to his, and that he was not willing to let that pass without comment.

'You're here, Miss Brooke,' he said as she entered and paused a moment uncertainly: he indicated the seat on his left with a gesture that seemed to her strained senses an intentional annoyance.

She gave him in silence a flashing, defiant look and, sitting down, turned at once to her neighbour on her other side, Mrs. Corbillion, and made an immediate conquest of that lady's heart by the admiration she lavished on Toutou, the Persian cat, as the readiest defence that occurred to her ruffled mind. She could not, however, use a cat as conversation all through dinner, even though Mrs. Corbillion, once started on her favourite which lay with languid grace across her ample lap, flowed on abundantly: apart from their defensive value, Cecilia was not greatly interested in cats, and her attention wandered. She then discovered that she need not have devoted herself so intently to Mrs. Corbillion: John Harland was not waiting to pounce upon her the second she was disengaged. On the contrary, he was talking with much

animation to Miss Marchant; he was apparently in the best of spirits and was both amusing and amused. Cecilia was so inconsistent as to find that his inattention fed her sense of anger even more thoroughly than his turning towards her. He laughed in answer to some remark by Miss Marchant, and she was shot through with a sudden spasm, a wave of emotion, unreasonable, unidentified, and terribly lacerating.

Mrs. Corbillion's conversation was then claimed by Mr. Standish, and Cecilia sat free for her right-hand neighbour: still that neighbour paid no heed. She tried to be glad, but every turn of his hand, every tone of his voice held a meaning and a memory that stabbed her heart with pain. Presently, however, conversation grew general: Miss Marchant spoke across Mrs. Standish to Lady Wraybourne, and John Harland spoke to her.

'Resuming our conversation where it was interrupted by the gong,' he said lightly, 'you meant of course that you didn't expect to see me again this evening, not that you never expected to see me any more at all, I hope?'

She bit her lip, and anger predominated over pain. 'I don't know what I meant,' she answered with all the carelessness in her power. 'I don't remember what we were saying.'

He admitted the stroke by a swift side-glance, but continued in the same light tone as before, 'When I'm at Hartley Harland, I'm constantly over here, you know. Felicity and Dan are the children of one of my best friends and I've known them since they were born, off and on, that is.'

Cecilia made no reply, though he paused for one. He went on, 'And Lady Wraybourne's a dear, isn't she?'

'She has been very kind to me,' answered Cecilia tonelessly.

'So I run in and out as I like.'

'That must be very nice for Lady Wraybourne.'

'And for me.'

Again Cecilia made no answer: he was trying to extract from her some admission; let him try. Like all men, the one thing he could not abide was to be ignored: so much the worse for him. She hardened her heart and would have turned away but for his direct question, 'Have you been with Lady Wraybourne long, Miss Brooke?'

She looked at him: their eyes met directly. She saw in his no recognition at all, merely a polite questioning: it was intolerable, he was making sport of her secretly. She flushed up and

was about to answer him with cold formality, when Lady Wraybourne broke in from the end of the table,

'Not long, John, and not stopping either, I'm afraid.'

He looked at Lady Wraybourne swiftly: the news, Cecilia noted, was unexpected by him; that again, she thought, was characteristic of a man's mind, to suppose that she would remain quietly, calmly there as a target for his private archery.

'I'm sure,' he said politely, 'Miss Brooke must have some good reason.'

'Too dull here,' explained Lady Wraybourne. 'I'm not surprised. But she's not leaving me or the children at once, of course: she's with us till Easter when Evelyn and Walter'll be home. So we must make the most of her till then.'

'I see,' he answered slowly.

Mrs. Standish helped Cecilia by leaning across the table from beside Miss Marchant and saying to her, 'Are you a restless person too, Miss Brooke?'

'Too?' queried Cecilia.

'Like Sir John, I mean. He's a born wanderer; and hasn't settled down even now.'

'I saw a photograph of him in one of the illustrated papers only the other day,' said Cecilia, glad of the opportunity to emphasize to John her belief that in coming to Darlingby she had done nothing to bring herself back into his life, 'on the west coast of Africa. That's why I was so surprised to see him here to-day.'

'West coast of Africa?' interjected John.

'You were there two years ago, John,' said Lady Wraybourne.

'Ah, yes, so I was.'

'The papers got hold of an old photograph, I suppose. I saw it too, in *The Tattler* or one of those papers, I think.'

'Very misleading,' he said quietly.

'They ought to be more careful,' cried Cecilia warmly.

'That is so,' he answered, turning at once to her with an air of politeness, 'but it's not a thing that's mattered—in this case at all events.'

Cecilia was silenced. It had mattered greatly and he knew it and he knew that she knew it; but she could not then say so.

The next moment the conversation veered to the subject she had most dreaded. Mr. Standish bent forward in his place on Lady Wraybourne's right to say,

'Those trips must be a thing of the past, obviously. You could hardly take Lady Harland to the Gold Coast.'

'Hardly,' murmured John.

'Where is she?' asked Mr. Standish. 'I'm most anxious to pay my respects to her. If it hadn't been for that confounded bronchitis I'd have braved England, even in November, to be at your wedding.'

'I'm sure of it,' replied John.

'What have you done with her?'

'What have I done with her?' repeated John, elevating his eyebrows quizzically. 'What a question to ask a man in the twentieth century! As though any man had the least control now over any woman! It isn't a fair question, is it, Miss Brooke? You'll support me, I know.'

He spoke in the most airy manner possible: it seemed to Cecilia not only that he was putting that on so as to avoid arousing in the minds of all but one of his audience the slightest suspicion that he had anything to conceal, but also that he was genuinely enjoying the situation, by reason of his knowledge that one person was present to whom his double meaning was plain and yet correction or open resentment was forbidden. At the same time, and very inconsistently, her heart leapt within her. Could he conceivably have answered so if the woman in the train were his wife? He was aiming at her, Cecilia: she was his target and for all the pain of the arrows she rejoiced at their direction. She must do what lay in her power to make sure, but in her heart she had gained certainty. The opportunity of private speech was not now with her. He had paused in delicate irony for her expression of support; as that was not forthcoming, he continued in light answer to Mr. Standish,

'Unsupported, that's sad. It's true, anyway. Lady Harland's visiting. I wanted her with me, but no, she had other ideas. I believe, myself, she didn't want to see Hartley Harland for the first time in ceremony, and they'd have had a triumphal arch and all that sort of thing, given half a chance.'

'When do you expect her, then?'

'No date fixed. She's been there, you know, just casually to have a look at the old place and see if she liked it.'

'And of course she went into raptures to you over it?' asked Mrs. Standish.

'No, I wouldn't say that.'

'Then she must have most peculiar ideas of beauty.'

Cecilia could hardly sit still: this was almost beyond endurance. If John agreed with the last supposition, it would be, quite.

It was with an odd little sense of unlooked-for warmth that she heard his answer given with a touch of seriousness for the first time, 'Those who feel most can't as a rule put their feelings into words, Mrs. Standish.'

'That's profoundly true,' exclaimed Mrs. Corbillion, with a dramatically expressive glance at Toutou and an obvious stroking of his sleek smoothness.

'But all the same, my dear fellow,' remarked Mr. Standish, 'you're very remiss. If Lady Harland doesn't want to come to Hartley Harland yet, what are you doing up here all by yourself?'

'Business; can't get away from it. Marriage doesn't free one from it, unfortunately.'

'No, but I suppose it's only a fleeting visit.'

'I'm not sure. I don't find Yorkshire as dull as Miss Brooke does. We must brighten it for her, Lady Wraybourne.'

'Please don't bother about me,' Cecilia found strength to answer, trying to make her voice do more things than it could. She wished to convey to the company in general a polite rejection of any proposal to bring her, the humble governess, into prominence; she wished to suggest to Lady Wraybourne that her life needed no brightening whilst with her; she wished, most of all, to show the mocking man she had married that he would find in her no source of fun. She was not successful, in her last aim at any rate: John was quick to take advantage of her remark, saying with a simulation of great courtesy, 'It'll be no bother: it'll be a pleasure, of course.'

Cecilia could have slapped him: with difficulty she made no reply, but she was momentarily eased by Mr. Standish's persistence in saying,

'Well, I'm disappointed. Eleanor and I've been so much looking forward to meeting Lady Harland; and now you say she's not here and you don't know when she will be.'

'Did I say that?' inquired John with innocence.

'Certainly you did.'

'Then of course I didn't speak the truth: I very seldom do. But all the same Lady Harland's still at the delightfully impulsive stage of life. She loves sudden decisions, and I never quite know

what she'll resolve to do next. She's here to-day and gone to-morrow, as you might say. Rather your position, Miss Brooke, isn't it, in a fashion ?'

He bowed very slightly towards her, and then, before she could speak, turned to Miss Marchant and began a diversion on the delights of not making up one's mind about plans till the very last minute which was amusingly phrased and made the others laugh.

Cecilia sat on silent, trying to distinguish between her anger and her relief. He had mocked her, but he had also defended her, and it was evident that he had contrived to keep her desertion of him concealed even from his old friends. Her thoughts were still whirling chaotically when Lady Wraybourne rose from the table.

In the drawing-room Cecilia felt her continued presence unnecessary. Miss Marchant was talking clothes to Mrs. Corbillon, and Mrs. Standish had much to say to Lady Wraybourne. As the fifth wheel on the social coach she felt she could quietly roll away ; and she longed intensely to be alone. She was unnerved and very wildly tossed on the heaving waters of emotion. She had sat next to her husband a whole hour, and she did not know what to think of him or the situation in which she now found herself. Was Hamlet's knowledge right, that a man could smile and be a villain ? John had been at once maddening, self-assured, provocative, in consequent, and lit with all his old attraction. Was he insensitive or one of those who, as he said, because they feel, use words as a screen ? Did it matter which he was ? There was still the woman in the train, whether he had married her or not, and there was still the unattractive little boy. Such was the glamour of John's presence that she was in danger already of forgetting both : that was pitifully weak of her ; but she was weak, to-night at least. She would no longer expose her weakness : she would slip upstairs, to the nursery where she belonged.

She rose and approached Lady Wraybourne to explain that she felt she should be returning to her charges.

'He's a dear fellow,' she heard Lady Wraybourne say, 'one of the most trustworthy characters I know, and I've known him all his life.'

'You weren't at the wedding ?' asked Mrs. Standish.

'No, I had influenza, and it knocked me up—which reminds me, I've never even sent John a present. How very forgetful of me !'

Cecilia stopped : she pretended to be busy replacing a daffodil half fallen from a vase. There was no evil in listening to an open conversation, and against her will it allured her terribly.

'I hope the marriage is turning out well,' remarked Mrs. Standish primly. 'His language is rather offhand, as though he wasn't very much in love.'

'Just like him to pretend : he's a romantic at heart, you know, and it's his humour to conceal it. He was very amusing at dinner, I thought.'

'Yes, but a trifle irresponsible.'

'He enjoyed trying to mystify Oliver, I could see.'

'In other words, Sarah, you would admit it, if you weren't so fond of him, that he has not been steadied by marriage in the least.'

'My dear Eleanor,' replied Lady Wraybourne with sudden warmth, 'John's a well-developed sense of humour, thank heavens, but there's no one I know who requires steadying less or has a keener feeling for his responsibilities.'

'I'm glad to hear you say so. Marriage is a responsibility, even in these days.'

'I suppose so, sometimes,' replied Lady Wraybourne drily.

Cecilia could listen no longer : it seemed to her excited brain that all conversations led consciously or unconsciously to her and that each ended in a sting. Saying to Lady Wraybourne as naturally as possible that she would run up and see if the children were sound asleep, she went quickly to the door to avoid detention.

She had delayed too long : either John had found Mr. Standish dull or he had hurried to anticipate her. She met him in the doorway, and, again taken unaware, lost the moment to speak first and pass. He at once said, 'Well met, Miss Brooke. You might tell me more about that photograph of me you saw in the papers.'

Vanity, vanity ; all men, thought Cecilia, were at heart the same, egoists always. Aloud she said with a pose of carelessness that brought an instant's twinkle into his eyes, 'I don't remember much about it, I'm afraid, Sir John. I just happened to see it casually.'

'Where did it say I was ?'

'At Accra, I think.'

'Yes, I was photographed on my visit there, but that's ages ago.'

'A very good photograph too,' interjected Lady Wraybourne from her chair: 'you gave me a copy, I remember, John.'

'Did I? Let's have a look at it.'

'I've mislaid it, I'm afraid. I don't keep such trifles.'

'You're quite right,' he said heartily: 'they're not meant to be kept; they soon clutter up a house.'

'The papers have no business to be so careless,' said Cecilia with a touch of asperity.

'They always are,' added Mr. Standish. 'Why, I remember seeing a notice saying you were off to America.'

'A fabrication,' said John quietly; 'I saw it too, but it wasn't worth contradicting.'

He half turned as he spoke to address Mr. Standish behind him. Cecilia, her ears tingling, took instant advantage of the moment: she slipped through the doorway and, before he had realized her departure, was hurrying up the stairs. His tone had been too quiet: she was as certain as though she were possessed of definite proof that he had himself inserted all the contradictory paragraphs she had seen.

CHAPTER XXV.

It was long before Cecilia lost consciousness in sleep that night. It seemed to her almost as though she had been caught up in a whirlwind so that she was spun helplessly, without power of direction. She had been a leaf torn from the tree, blown along hurtfully in the dirt, then she had come to a cranny where she had clung, and now she was again miserably in motion. John's proximity awoke in her a whole torrent of violently contradictory feelings: she was thrilled, she was enraged, she was happy, she was wretched. She had touched him and he had flamed in her, she had talked with him and he had mocked her: he had pretended to have had no previous knowledge of her, and by word, look, and gesture he had proved that she was continually in his mind. What was the meaning of that lacerating spasm that had been hers when he had laughed so pleasurably at some remark by Miss Marchant? Could it by any possibility have been jealousy? How could she be jealous when by her own impulse she had cast him finally away? She must not allow herself to be so inconsistent, so silly, and so weak. Tortured by her thoughts, Cecilia was a great while wasting sleep.

March came in more mild even than a lamb. When Cecilia, usually awake long before the children, was pulled out of the many fathoms of slumber into which she had at last fallen by Felicity's clambering into her bed, it was a delicious spring morning, with rejoicing birds and ripening buds. The cooing of wood-pigeons from the trees bordering the lawns came soothingly into her ears. She was desperately sleepy, and the snuggling Felicity immediately asked her for a story, supported eagerly a few minutes later by the rosy, yellow-headed rascal who clambered pushingly in on her other side.

'I shan't tell you anything if you can't keep still,' protested the joggled Cecilia. Seeing no help for it, she told them a favourite story about the wood pigeons or 'coo-coos,' taking their adventures past the excitement of the first flight, until 'they all lived happily ever after—at least,' she added in a low voice, 'they didn't. No one ever does.'

* This Felicity entirely declined to accept in any form, till interrupted by Danny who remarked with great cheerfulness, 'There's a 'ickle black and white f'og in the day-nursley.'

Felicity grinned understandingly at Cecilia, and pleased with the reception of his inaccurate irrelevance, Danny burrowed down like a caterpillar into its cocoon and murmured, 'Tell me 'nudder 'tawly.'

'No more stories,' cried Cecilia. 'We're late already.' She jumped out of bed and the day began.

In spite of the freshness of the first of the March mornings, Cecilia's energy soon flagged. She was jaded after her wretched night and the conflicting winds of her emotions, and she shrank from company. It was with real gratitude that she heard Agnes volunteer to relieve her with the task of taking the children out for their usual run till midday when Danny slept and Felicity was supposed to rest. She accepted at once and the children, always agog for anything fresh and full of whispered mischief, were got ready and departed under Agnes's charge.

Cecilia had more than an hour to herself and she employed it ill. The children's unchequered gaiety, the warm and fragrant beauty of the early spring, increased her melancholy: she felt so old and unwanted, and she wished for a bleak and bitter day of rain. If she had not been so tired, she would have been greatly vexed with herself for her weakness: as it was, all the earth, except herself, seemed happy, and she, by reason of the contrast,

an unfortunate indeed. She leaned out of the window, thinking, trying to tell herself not to be such a coward, and failing dismally. It was contrast, contrast that was the curse : she had been battling her way gradually up the steep slope to contentment until he, the one he in the world for her always, had reappeared so startlingly at her side.

Having reached the lowest rung of her ladder of unhappiness, she saw Agnes wandering by herself in the garden below. For a few moments the sight conveyed no particular message to her : then with a climb back to ordinary, practical affairs she remembered the children, and called to her. Agnes, willing but at no time intelligent, answered back to say she had lost them : they had, she complained, disobeyed her and deliberately and successfully hidden themselves. Cecilia, with a glance at her watch and a smile for Agnes, outwitted by two monkeys, descended to search, retrieve, and reprimand.

She had not to go far for success. Felicity, she reflected, had an ingenious mind and a good sense of direction : Danny alone might have gone anywhere ; with his temptress and guide his way was fixed. Felicity had admired the little summer shelter, round behind out of sight at the end of the garden, the few times she had been taken in that direction : she was certain to have headed for it now. Cecilia's reasoning was rewarded : as she neared the shelter she heard Felicity's clear, young voice, ' But they didn't. 'Cilia says nobody never does ; she said so this morning.'

Cecilia paused : the child had evidently gathered some one in for audience. It gave her a sudden irrepressible leap of heart when from within the shelter she heard the deep voice of John Harland utter her name, ' Well, Cecilia's wrong. People always live happily ever after in all the fairy tales.'

' 'Cilia's never wrong,' declared the loyal Felicity.

' Watch me hop, will 'oo ? ' enquired Danny's voice from the further corner : he was evidently of the opinion that it was time for this feminine form of talk to yield to action, himself as protagonist ; the bumping sound of a very inexperienced hopper proceeded.

' I don't say she's often wrong,' conceded John : ' but a princess simply must live happily ever after or she isn't a princess.'

' 'Cilia's a princess,' asserted Felicity.

' I believe she is, a princess in disguise.'

' What's 'guise ? '

' Oh, well, dressed up, you know. Are you awfully fond of her ? '

Silence. Cecilia, listening with shining eyes, could well visualize the affectionate Felicity, unable to find words for any direct answer to such a question, nodding her head wisely up and down with a delighted grin on her round, happy face. Silence, however, where Felicity and Danny were concerned, was far too fragile ever to last: it was broken now by Danny, tired of hopping, 'Tell me a 'tawly.'

There was a sound of pushing and squeezing, a quick grunt of discomfort from a labouring climber, an eager 'Tell me!' from Felicity, followed by a 'Not tell Shishiti; tell me sum'fing,' from Danny, and then John's amused voice,

'This is all very well, but how am I to tell you something and not Felicity?'

Very cautiously Cecilia peeped round the corner of the shelter. It was an engaging sight that met her eyes. In the centre of the garden seat sat John, knees apart: on one knee was perched Danny, supported by one of John's hands whilst he did acrobatics in the way of seeing how far he could lean outwards, at a considerable and entirely ignored strain to his supporter; on the other sprawled Felicity, in an attitude extremely indecorous but also entirely affectionate and comfortable. John seemed entirely content to have two pairs of earthy shoes kicking away at his legs, and to be enjoying himself with great simplicity of satisfaction. What struck Cecilia was the very unusually complete acceptance of him by the children—and for all their sensitive affection they did not take at all readily to those with whom they were not familiar—and also, and even more, his absolute acceptance of them. He was not merely as though he were amused by them but as though he had never been without them.

'What am I to tell you?' he asked.

'I know an 'ickle f'og,' said Danny, who, having recently been given a china frog, was impressed with the reality of its existence and determined to impress others also: as an answer to John's question the statement lacked something, as Felicity felt.

'Tell me about Micky Mocky Moo,' she demanded.

'But he belongs to Cecilia,' John objected. 'You told me he did.'

'Well, but I'll let you have him.'

'Won't she mind?'

'Cilia doesn't mind anything. Why, when Danny poured all his porridge over his face, she just laughed. Danny's a very naughty little boy, you know.'

'Danny very good boy,' on the contrary asserted Danny unexpectedly: he wriggled down on to his feet, unable to sit still for more than a few seconds.

'Go on about Micky Mocky Moo,' insisted Felicity, and John obeyed.

Cecilia listened, enthralled. The being to which she had given the absurd name was her own very special play with Felicity, a little sprite who was always up to every form of mischief. 'He's only 'tendy,' Felicity used occasionally to whisper, 'isn't he?' And Cecilia would then assure her that he was indeed only a pretence. The child adored the little comedies of Cecilia's invention and all the scrapes and mischiefs of Micky Mocky Moo: but until that hour no one, not even 'Grannibel' had ever been privileged to be a sharer of the jealously guarded secret of his creation. And here was John Harland, the usurper, plunging in straight away to the very citadel of her dominions. He had a quaint conceit, and Felicity was thrilled at the astonishing adventures: even Danny gave up hopping, ceased squirming, and hanging over his knee listened greedily also. The conclusion of one adventure was at once so preposterous and so comically narrated that Cecilia forgot herself. She laughed aloud suddenly, and he looked swiftly round and saw her.

'Hail, princess!' he said instantly, unembarrassed. 'Looking for me or for these piccaninnies?'

Cecilia hardly knew whether she most admired the ready humour with which without a second's thought he threw himself into the situation or resented the easy impudence of his suggestion that she could conceivably be looking for him: she did not know by what emotion she was stirred; she was only aware that she was very powerfully stirred indeed. She wished she could reply with equal sportiveness, but that was at that moment impossible to her. The best she could do was to murmur,

'It happens to be the children. It's Danny's time for sleep.'

'Lucky beggar!' exclaimed John, catching Danny who on realizing that Cecilia had not merely arrived but arrived for him was sliding away with clumsy haste: he picked him up as neatly as a good full-back at Rugby fields a bouncing ball and handed the wriggling rascal over into Cecilia's arms. He and she were very close in the transference and their hands met by accident under Danny's contortions: once again Cecilia battled with the swift sensation of burning that ran up her arms, so unsuccessfully

that she all but dropped Danny. Avoiding this, she yet could not hold him, and so set him down with the injunction to come along with her. Felicity needed no injunction: she took Cecilia's hand and kissed it gently. It was done with the endearing charm of complete simplicity and it went straight to Cecilia's heart: she did not dare look at John to see how he noted the action.

'I want to see the 'killel!' cried Danny, running off ahead of Cecilia as she turned. Felicity clapped her hands with enthusiasm, and in a moment the two were twenty yards away with surprising agility.

'Killel? What's that?' asked John. 'I'm not there.'

'Squirrel,' said Cecilia. 'Danny saw one in a tree the other day.'

She followed after the children and John came with her. For the first time since she had left the compartment in the train—and that seemed whole æons of time ago, almost in a different existence altogether—she and he were alone together. An agitation of nervousness seized upon her and she could say no more at all. The quick humour that had lit up his face died out: it seemed that he too was terribly conscious of the fact that they were alone.

They paced some steps in a silence that increased Cecilia's agitation: he was the first to break through it.

'They're a happy little pair,' he said suddenly.

'Yes.'

'Felicity has great charm.'

'Yes. I'm almost afraid for her.'

'Afraid?'

'She's so sensitive she's bound to suffer.'

'It is a pity to be too sensitive,' he agreed with a quick side-glance. They walked on a moment in renewed silence.

Cecilia tried to find something she could put into words—anything rather than this speechless, throbbing companionship, but he could think of nothing. He again spoke first.

'Jolly things, children.'

'Yes,' she murmured.

'They're about the only things that make life worth while,' he added with a touch of intensity unexpected by her.

'Yes,' she repeated uneasily.

'You've made these two very fond of you.'

'I'm glad.'

‘So am I.’

To this she had no answer: she wished the garden were not so long. It was exquisite pain to be walking through it by his side: she feared every step that she would betray the degree of her feeling.

‘It seems sad you should be leaving them so soon,’ he murmured.

‘It’s odious,’ she flashed at him, breaking suddenly out of her guarded restraint; ‘but how can I help it?’

‘Are you seriously asking for my advice?’ he answered quietly.

‘No!’ she cried instantly, impelled by a force she did not understand.

‘I hardly supposed you were,’ he replied, unmoved. ‘I am of course insufficiently acquainted with the facts.’

Cecilia could have burst into tears. The golden moment was shattered, the opportunity for some interchange of knowledge, even for explanation, if explanation ever could be possible, was lost. They were still utterly distant, she felt, one from the other, walking on different sides of icy barriers of misconception and pain, he was still resolute in his mockery of her—and across the lawn towards them was sailing the solid body of Mrs. Corbillion, followed with delicate steps by her Persian favourite, Toutou. In all Cecilia’s world there was but one tiny note of music: unless the surge of her longing deceived her, she heard, softly uttered from between John’s outwardly smiling lips, a delicious, heartening ‘Damn!’

‘Did you find the children, Sir John?’ asked Mrs. Corbillion, bearing down upon them graciously.

‘I did, but we’ve lost them again,’ he answered with quickness. ‘Elusive little monkeys: no wonder Miss Brooke finds them too much for her.’

‘I don’t, really I don’t,’ cried Cecilia.

‘But Lady Wraybourne said you’re leaving.’

‘Yes, but—’

‘It’s not the place for her, is it, Mrs. Corbillion?’

‘Children are trials,’ agreed that lady heavily. ‘They’re not like cats. Now Toutou, if he’s properly brushed and taken care of, gives no trouble at all, do you, darling?’ It seemed a propitious moment for the idea that had germinated in Mrs. Corbillion’s mind. ‘You’re really leaving here, Miss Brooke?’ she asked.

'As soon as ever Mr. and Mrs. Baird return. I—I've got to stay till then.'

'Quite, and after that?'

'I—I don't exactly know.'

'Then come to me.'

'To you, Mrs. Corbillion?'

'Yes, I realised last night that you're just the person I need. Come to me and take charge of my precious Toutou.'

At this point John Harland laughed. With a face of flame Cecilia whirled on him, gave him one furious glance, answered Mrs. Corbillion shakenly, 'Thank you, I'll think about it; I must find the children now,' and darted away desperately in the direction of the squirrel's tree, from the line of which she had been lured by the magic of John's company. A cat's companion! And it had amused him! Tears of mortification leapt scaldingly into her eyes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CECILIA did not see John Harland again that day, nor did she so much as hear him mentioned. She did not know whether he returned immediately to the solitudes of Hartley Harland, or sunned himself in the company of Lady Wraybourne and her guests: neither did she gain enlightenment as to the impression she had made upon Mrs. Corbillion by fleeing so abruptly from the offer that that lady had graciously extended to her. She hustled the children through their luncheon and, timing her exit carefully, was out of the house and away with them for their afternoon walk without encountering a soul. On her return she found to her great relief a message from Lady Wraybourne to say that she would be motoring late that afternoon and would therefore not expect the children down. She romped with them with a feverish abandon that intoxicated them with glee, gave them their baths delightfully indifferent to splashes, craftily sent Agnes away, and then sent word downstairs that she could not desert the nursery that evening.

Alone by the fire, she played see-saw with herself. She longed to see John again, to be with him alone and be gifted with the power of speech: she hoped also that she would never, never again be in his presence to be so tormented. It was not, as she was honest enough to recognise, his sole responsibility that she suffered such

agonies: if much sprang from the policy of refusal to recognise her that he had deliberately adopted, much also was due to his mere presence, for which she could not hold him to blame. He might indeed have absented himself altogether from Darlingby on the discovery that she was there: but did she wish that? Could she truly say to her heart that it was terrible to her that he had returned at once, and sought her out a third time the very next morning? Not terrible, but wonderful. Even now she could not believe it: she was moving in a mist, with nothing solid or certain before her eyes and little enough of substance under her feet.

How strange it had been to see and hear him in the shelter, talking to the children! It had somehow been so unexpected: not merely had she been, as twice before in quick succession, totally unprepared for his appearance, but his whole occupation, manner, and tone had taken her by surprise. Ever since her descent from the train she had been creating a picture of him in her mind; she had been combating all those old memories of his sunny humour and deep tenderness and quick appreciation that had caused her to fall in love with him, by recalling to herself the image of the woman and the little boy: so alone could she justify her swift and absolute abandonment of him. He was not the man she had thought; she had never known him.

It was therefore with the strength of a new revelation that she once again became aware of the existence in him of those qualities in which she once had so firmly believed—the whole pain of her disillusion had come from the firmness of that belief: it had meant a tearing apart of the very tissues of her soul. Now in a calmer hour, when, no longer dizzy with happiness and trembling on the threshold of a new and strange existence, she could examine and reflect, the re-creation of her husband was a deeply disturbing force. She had seen him, almost against her will, not as during these dark weeks she had felt herself forced to see him, but as she had seen him in the halcyon days of her engagement. He mocked her, it was true, and for that she owed him anger, but in no degree was his bearing that of a man whose guilty secret had been surprised: more, in no degree was it that of a man who had a guilty secret to be surprised. Was it possible that she had deceived herself? Had some chance word, chance likeness so worked upon her abnormally agitated mind as to cause her to give undue credence to a discreditable, faith-shattering connection? If that were so, she had been terribly wrong—and yet her memory, repro-

ducing with torturing exactness all the details of that devastating interview, the words the woman had used and the unmistakable appearance of the little boy, refused to allow her to think so. The little boy was indubitably a Harland: there was no avoidance of that truth. The woman had stated, both specifically and by every implication, that her words had reference to Sir John Harland: she had no conceivable reason to lie to a stranger, and John had no double. What a tangle of agonizing briers it all was! Cecilia's reason compelled her to disbelieve in him, and her heart cried out to her that it was worse than folly so to do.

She turned, despairing, from that problem to the lesser, but still wounding, memory of his laughter at Mrs. Corbillion's suggestion. The sound had pierced through the armour with which she had sought to gird herself: it had stung her so sharply that she had not been able to control her speech or movement. Why? Looking back upon it, Cecilia wondered. At the moment it had seemed born of pure malice, an ungenerous triumphing over the lowliness to which she was reduced: as such it had been beyond endurance. But was that the right interpretation? This also, reviewed in a calmer hour, bore a different aspect. In misfortune one's sense of humour is apt to be mislaid: in happier days it would have seemed, so Cecilia was forced to admit to herself, a matter for laughter that she, who was no cat lover, should have been singled out by such a solemn mistress as Mrs. Corbillion as the one person needed for the precious Persian. Or, again, was it not in reality, that laugh that had stabbed so cruelly in her ears, a sound that had been directed against Mrs. Corbillion? What if John had laughed noting the serene assurance of the offerer and knowing, from his past knowledge of Cecilia, the attitude of mind in which she would receive the suggestion? But John was behaving as though he had no past knowledge of her: the problem was to discover how far he was consistent or inconsistent with himself. 'What would I not give,' murmured Cecilia longingly to herself, 'if only I could for one moment see clearly down to the depths of his heart!' The thought was instantly tempered by the reflection that she had nothing of worth in all the world to give, except only her two rings, the one of her wedding of no value to anyone else and imbued only with pain to her, and the other of that impossibly happy engagement, the remembrance of which was wine gone bitter to the taste. So throughout a lonely evening Cecilia tormented herself without profit.

It was not until the following afternoon that she had any talk with Lady Wraybourne: as she was entering the house with the children after their outing, which she had taken in the furthest direction from Hartley Harland, she met Lady Wraybourne in the little side-hall through which she had to pass. Felicity and Danny ran to meet their 'Grannibel,' with that exuberant welcome which is a crown upon any adult to receive, but it was apparent that it was not specially to see them that Lady Wraybourne had happened to be there. She greeted them both appropriately but looked over their bobbing heads at Cecilia with humorously pursed-up lips, and then asked, 'And what have you been doing to one of my guests, pray?'

Cecilia's heart misgave her: did Lady Wraybourne mean John, and had he betrayed her identity or been complaining of her? She drew herself erect, tautened to meet whatever might betide, and answered nervously, 'What's happened?'

'Don't be alarmed,' replied Lady Wraybourne mischievously. 'I'm terribly grateful to you. You've done for me what I couldn't do for myself.'

'Cilia very clever,' observed Felicity.

'So'm I, very clever boy,' asserted Danny.

He was at once contradicted by his sister crushingly and, as he was quite unwilling to be crushed, a private argument developed on the normal lines of juvenile obstinacy, unheeded by the elders.

'What have I done?' enquired Cecilia, relieved.

'I can forgive a person for being wicked so much more easily than I can for being dull,' answered Lady Wraybourne rather irrelevantly. 'To bore is the worst of all crimes, in a guest at all events, and of all bores the most unending is a cat's cradle. I thought I'd got to put up with her for a week, but, thanks to you, she's gone.'

'But I've done nothing!'

'Nothing? My dear, you underrate the sensitiveness of a prize Persian! According to Mrs. Corbillion, you gave it a shock it'll take a month to get over! She was ages getting it to earth again.'

'But what did I do?'

'Raced across the lawn, trod on its tail, sent it flying up a tree—and just after the trustful owner had offered you the post of keeper. John Harland told me it was one of the funniest things he's seen for a long time; he said she was bursting with indigna-

tion and trying to coax the brute down from its bough at the same time.'

'I never saw it or I'd——'

'Don't depreciate your merits. She came in at last petting the creature disgustingly and told me all through lunch that her faith in human nature was shattered.'

'I'm dreadfully sorry.'

'I'm not. She was still talking about it when she left this morning.' Lady Wraybourne paused, laughed, and then added more seriously, 'If you're determined to leave, at least you won't be going to Mrs. Corbillion. Not that that would have done in any case. You leave it to me: I'll find something for you.'

Cecilia murmured her thanks with a sudden pang of emptiness, disentangled the children who were now struggling, silent and locked together in tenacity, for the undivided possession of some sticks they had brought in, consoled the weaker Danny, reproved Felicity, and took them both upstairs. All the way up and through tea her mind was busy, as far as the children allowed, with the amusement of John Harland, wondering what exactly he had said and in what tone he had said it.

(To be continued.)

PERSIAN LEGENDS.

I.

MIRZA HUSSEIN, my Persian teacher, his little insignificant body submerged in flowing draperies, his small intelligent eyes a-twinkle even while he uttered the pious Moslem platitudes in which his soul delighted, would come every evening during my stay in Hamadan, and while the dusk made the white falling petals of blossom seem luminous in the garden, and the clouds gathered and hurled themselves in storms over the Asadabad pass and the ridges of Elvand,—he would sit with a leg hitched under him to lessen the discomfort of European chairs, and freeing one hand from its many long sleeves to take fresh cigarettes at frequent intervals, would tell me legends of the Shi'as, their saints and martyrs, their few and passionate loves and innumerable hatreds.

'Tell me,' said I one day, 'some tale of our own Lord Jesus who is also a prophet among you.'

And this is what he told.

'The Presence, Jesus,' said he, 'once lived in the house of a poor widow whose only son was a Gatherer of Thorns—one such as you see here, who drives his donkey out in the early morning beyond the city gates and leads it home laden at nightfall. And this household was so poor that our Lord Jesus Himself would supply all the needs of the family out of the reserves of His own power.

'One day the woman came to Him and said: "My son will approach Thee this evening to do Thee honour as his custom is. But his breast is straitened with sorrow. Do Thou, if Thou wilt, ask him what is the cause."

'And our Lord Jesus said: "I will ask."

'When the boy came and honoured Him, though he did not know Him to be a prophet, the Lord Jesus asked him the cause of his trouble.

"What is the good," said the boy, "of telling a grief for which there is no remedy? But if Thou must hear, know that every morning, as I drive my donkey out by the City Gate, I look up and see the Shah's Daughter in her own room, which has a balcony and hangs over the street; and my heart melts towards her and I desire her for my wife. Now judge Thou of the hopelessness of this desire."

'But the Presence, Jesus, said: "It can be attained."

The boy thought he was mocked.

"Who art Thou," he said, "to be a guest in my house and make me tell my sorrow and mock me?"

'The Presence, Jesus, said: "I do not mock. What I tell thee is truth. Go to the palace even as thou art, and ask to marry the daughter of the Shah." And He cast His glance upon the boy, and it filled him with courage flowing into him as a river, and he went even as he was, and when the servants of the palace asked him his business, he told them that he came to marry the daughter of the Shah.

'They went to the Shah in his Diwan and said: "We have turned from thy gates a stranger dressed in rags who says that he comes to marry thy daughter."

'The Shah wondered at such boldness and said: "I must see this man." And he sent his servants to find him.

'When they brought him into the Diwan in his presence, the Gatherer of Thorns stood and repeated his request and said that he came to marry the Shah's daughter.

"Thou knowest not what thou sayest," said the Shah. "Hast thou not heard that a dowry is demanded?"

"What is the dowry?" asked the Gatherer of Thorns.

"A tray full of jewels as great as hens' eggs," said the Shah.

'Then the boy left the palace and returned to his mother's house and told our Lord Jesus of the Shah's words and the dowry.

'The Presence, Jesus, said: "It can be found." And he bade him bring a tray, and He spoke to the stones and pebbles of the yard and told them to gather themselves together on the tray, and He glanced upon them, and as He did so they turned to shining jewels. Then He said: "Put the tray on thy head and go to the palace of the Shah."

'And the boy did so, and went, dressed even as he was, and the servants let him through to the Diwan. But when the king saw the jewels, he exclaimed: "These are not enough: seven such trays are required for my daughter's dowry."

'And the boy left his tray and returned to his mother's house, and told our Lord Jesus of the Shah's words and the seven trays that were demanded.

'The Presence, Jesus, said: "They can be found." And He bade the woman of the house bring seven trays and He spoke to the stones and pebbles of the yard, and they gathered themselves

on the trays in heaps, and when He glanced upon them they turned to many-coloured jewels. Then He said to the boy : " Call six of thy friends, and go thou first and let them follow bearing the trays upon their heads, and place them on the floor along one side of the Diwan before the hands of the king." And the boy did so.

' Now the servants let him through, and the Shah was waiting, and when the Shah saw the seven trays full of jewels along one side of the Diwan, he said to the boy : " Surely someone has done this for thee ? "

" " Yes," said the Gatherer of Thorns. " A dear friend has done it, who lodges in my mother's house."

" " That can be no other," said the Shah, " than 'Isa the son of Miriam, for He alone is able to accomplish such things. Now go, and fetch Him, and He shall write out the contract of marriage for my daughter straightway."

' Then the boy went, and returned with the Presence, Jesus, who wrote out the contract of marriage for the Shah's Daughter. The Gatherer of Thorns was escorted to the bath : rich garments were given him : and as he came forth, the glance of our Lord Jesus fell upon him and transfigured him with nobility and beauty. In two days' time the array of the bride was ready, and the bride in her bridal chamber waited for the groom.

' But he said to our Lord Jesus : " One thing yet troubles me before I go, and unless I learn from Thee concerning it, I shall never have full happiness."

' The Presence, Jesus, said : " What is this thing ? "

" " Thou hast all power," said the Gatherer of Thorns : " if Thou wishest, all the riches of the world are Thine. Yet Thou livest as a poor man among us, and Thou hast neither servants nor good clothes nor possessions of any kind. Why is this ? "

' Then the Presence, Jesus, said : " Why shouldst thou know ? Is it not enough that thine own business is concluded, but thou must wish to know mine also ? "

' But the boy said : " My happiness can never be full until I know."

' Then our Lord Jesus said : " All the riches of this world must fade and my portion is not in it. The things that I have belong to an eternal world."

" " I too," said the boy, " desire the Last Things. How shall one friend possess one world, and the other friend another and a different ? I also will possess the eternal world."

“Then must thou leave all this,” said the Presence, Jesus.

‘And the boy divorced the Shah’s daughter and followed Jesus. And when our Lord Jesus walked upon the water of the sea, he too walked in His track. And when our Lord Jesus rose to the fourth Heaven where He now is (the Heaven in which the sun rises and sets), he remained as His executor on earth and was called Sham’un as-Safa, which is to say the Pure Candle.’

‘A mistake you Christians make,’ said the Mirza after I had thanked him, ‘is to think that the Presence, Jesus, was ever crucified.’

He was touching on a well-known Moslem belief, and I said nothing—knowing by sad experience that any remark moral or polemical might kill a story for the whole evening and leave me bogged in the platitudes of all the poets and ‘wise men’ of Mohammedan history. But I handed him another cigarette, and watched his red beard fade and reappear round the little point of light while the chorus of frogs croaked undisturbed in the darkness of the garden. Presently the Mirza went on :

‘When the Jews had surrounded the house in which He was resting, and the door was giving way under their blows, Gabriel appeared in the room where Jesus was, and he stood there in one corner, and stamped with one foot on the ground. Immediately a spring of water gushed out. Gabriel told our Lord to wash in that clear water : and when He had done so, and as He stood in it, and the water ran from His face and body, Gabriel lifted him on to his shoulder, and the ceiling opened and he carried Him into Heaven.

‘But the Jews outside saw only Jesus, for they could not see Gabriel who is an angel : (and the angels are so immense that if all the seas of the world were to be poured into a hole made between the two thumb-bones of one of them, *yet* it would not overflow.) And so when the door was broken in, one of the Jews whose name was Tatianus ran up on to the roof where Jesus had last been seen : and God threw the likeness of Jesus upon him, and all the rest believed that he was Jesus and his denials were vain ; he was crucified in the place of our Lord Jesus. But as for Him, He is, as I told you, in the fourth Heaven, where He carries out the service of God till the day of the appearance of the Imam.

‘And of the people who will see the day of Judgment with their living eyes there are only four : Jesus and Idris in Heaven and

Khizr and Elias on earth. But of these we will speak later, for the prayer has been called.'

With a sudden hurry, as of remorse for lingerings with the unbeliever, Mirza Hussein gathered himself together; stowed his small paraphernalia of learning, his pen box and horn-rimmed spectacles, into the dim folds of his many garments; and murmuring formulas of politeness with a bowed head, vanished among the shadows of the trees.

II.

'Khizr and Elias,' said Mirza Hussein, 'and Enoch (Idris) and Jesus the son of Mary will all come to the day of judgment without first having to undergo the trial of death. But of these four Enoch is certainly the most fortunate, for he dwells meanwhile in Behesht, which is the seventh and the highest Heaven, and as it were the Guest House of God. And he came there through his acquaintance and friendship with the greatest of the angels, Azrael the Angel of Death.'

Here Mirza Hussein paused and produced a box in imitation of a small metal volume, in which he kept his tobacco. It is dried in such powdery flakes that great care must be taken when you make a cigarette to close the lower end of the paper to keep the contents inside, and why they do not drop out while you smoke is always a mystery to me. It was better however not to interrupt the Mirza with irrelevant observations. Having packed his cigarette with great concentration and compression of the lips, he gave me a glance to make sure that his story was being taken as genuine history, and, apparently satisfied, went on.

'Azrael would often descend and come to speak with his friend Enoch on this earth. One day he found him with a brow full of trouble and distress, and when he enquired the cause, Enoch said to him: "I have been thinking of this, that all men must die, and none knows before he comes upon it what the taste of death will be. Gladly would I know before my day comes. Canst thou not take my soul and let it feel what death is like and bring it back to me again so that I may know?" And Azrael said: "I will go and ask leave of God."

'And he went, and came before God, and told Him that His servant Enoch wished to know the taste of death before he came to die. And God granted permission to Azrael to take his soul for a little while.

'Then Azrael descended, and took Enoch's soul and made it taste of death, and brought it back to Enoch. Then he asked him and said: "How didst thou find death?"

"Very hard," said Enoch.

'Now on another occasion Enoch said to Azrael his friend: "I should like to look upon Hell and Paradise if that were possible." And Azrael said: "I will go and ask leave of God."

'And he went, and came before God, saying: "Thy servant Enoch desires to look upon Paradise and Hell; and he is a faithful servant." And God granted permission.

'Then Azrael took Enoch, and showed him Jehennum, which is the Prison House of God, and he took him up through the six Heavens into the seventh, which is Behesht and the last and the highest. And then the time came to go. But Enoch said: "Nay. I have tried death, and I do not wish to try it again; and I have seen Hell and all the Heavens; and there is no place better than the place in which I now stand. I will remain here."

'And he remains there to this day, and until the day of the appearance of the Imam when he and Jesus the son of Mary will both descend to earth again.

'But Elias and Khizr are on earth even now, and if you are lost in the empty deserts and call upon their name they will appear to help you, for they assist travellers.'

'Elias I know,' said I, 'for he appears on the banks of the Tigris at sunset if you call him with suitable verses, and the Druses make vows to him in Syria, and the little candles that are lighted on small boards and sail down between the houses of Baghdad on Thursday nights are dedicated in his honour. But who is Khizr?'

The Mirza loved a question that permitted him to show his learning. He would then open out like some prickly bud to the sun, and his brown cloak would seem to expand in even more disproportionate volume over the garden seat.

'Some hold that Elias and Khizr are the same person,' said he; 'but this is not so, and the story of Khizr is mentioned in the Quran. I know the whole of it by heart . . . but,' he added hastily, for he had tried Persian Arabic on me before and had not been encouraged, 'I will tell it you as it is handed down in our traditions.'

'One day, in the Majliss of the king Alexander the Great, the Lord of the Two Horns, they spake of the Waters of Life in the Lands of Darkness. . . . And the king asked where the waters

lay, but none of his great men could tell him. Then Khizr, who was a stripling and dwelt in the king's court, stood up before all the wise men and said: "If the King will but ask, I will give him the news he desires."

'So the Lord of the Two Horns called the child and placed him at his side, and Khizr told of the Waters of Life, white as milk and sweet as honey, which rise through six hundred and sixty springs out of the Darknesses of the West. Whoever washes there and drinks that water will never die.

'Then Alexander, who wished to live for ever because his kingdom was so great, prepared for the journey. He asked Khizr what animal he should ride, and Khizr bade him mount a virgin mare, for their eyes are made of light: and in truth,' said the Mirza, 'I have noticed myself that a mare which has never foaled sees better in the dark than any other.'

'Khizr was sent ahead a day's journey with four thousand horsemen, so that where he camped one night the king would camp the next: and each of them took in his hand a salted fish, to plunge into the waters and test them, so that they might not go by the Waters of Life in ignorance.

'Now when Khizr came to the Western Darknesses, he held in his hand a jewel which threw light upon the path, and by this light he saw on every side white wells of water like milk. And he threw in his salted fish, and it swam away deep into the depths, and Khizr knew that these were the Springs of Life, and he washed in their water and drank of it and lives for ever. But as for Alexander of the Two Horns, he had no light, and he missed his way and wandered, until he came out by another road on the western side of the Darknesses, and found no wells of water: and he died in his time like other mortal men. Unto God we return.'

III.

I once told Mirza Hussein how, when I was in Baghdad, I visited the shrine of Kadhimain and pressed my hands upon the silver bars of the tomb.

This is a thing which few Christians, and hardly any Europeans ever do, and it was a hard morsel for a good Shi'a to swallow. But the Mirza, trained in the intricacies of Moslem scholasticism, has never yet, I believe, met a fact too obstinate to be turned inside out in that queer brain of his. If I had visited the two holy shrines which no infidel may enter—I could see him thinking, with his

little ferret eyes fixed on me like pin points—obviously I could not be quite as other unbelievers—or where was the prestige of the Imam? As a child will believe its own make-believe for all purposes of the game, so Mirza Hussein accepted me among the pilgrims; seized gratefully on my proffered remark that religious observances are meritorious for all; enlarged it into a Maxim and then into a Rhyming Couplet; asked me about Nejf and Kerbela, where I had only been able to stand like other Franks beside the outer door; and, skilfully gliding over this incongruity which obviously disappointed him, began to tell me the story of the two Imams who lie in Kadhimain beneath their golden domes.

‘The Imam Musa b. Ja’far,’ said Mirza Hussein, ‘was killed by Harun er- Rashid in the days of the Abbasside power: but it took many attempts, and the Imam was seven years in prison before he died. Harun’s men seized him while he stood in prayer in the Medina mosque, and since the people there loved him, Harun ordered two camels with covered litters to be sent, one to Baghdad and one to Basra, and none could tell in which of the two the Imam Musa travelled.

‘As it happened, he went to Basra, and he was lodged for a year in the house of the man who was intended to poison him. But his holiness was such that the man’s resolution failed and Harun finally brought him into his own castle of Baghdad and imprisoned him there.

‘Then Harun sent letters to the king of the Franks and said: “Send me three men, strong and savage, who will fulfil an order and ask no questions.”

‘The three men came, and they knew no word of Arabic, and the Caliph sent them into the inner room to kill Musa where he lay. But when they entered, the Imam rose to meet them, and he addressed each of them in his own language, and they marvelled and fell down at his feet and kissed them, and they went out by another door, home to their own country, avoiding the sight of the Caliph.

‘Then Harun sent a beautiful woman to the Imam as he prayed, to lead him from his straight path. And he watched through a small window, and presently he saw the woman fall down and put her forehead to the ground and pray behind the Imam. And when she came out, he questioned her and she said: “Indeed, Commander of the Faithful, he is a holy man: for as I stood there I saw a garden spread before him and women far more lovely than I am, who waved me back and said: ‘Turn thee away from Musa,

the Servant of the Righteous One.' ” And by this name has Musa been known ever since.

‘Then Harun tried once more to kill him, and his Vizir sent poisoned dates among the food. But the Imam saw those that were poisoned and chose them out and threw them to a dog near by, who ate them and died.

‘Then finally Harun threatened the jailor with death if Musa were not killed, and the jailor took up poisoned dates and forced the Imam to eat, so that he died. And because Harun was then out hunting, his dead body remained three days in the prison unburied. And when the Caliph returned it was handed to three black slaves and they carried it with insults through the streets of Baghdad.

‘It happened that one Suleiman, who had been Musa’s friend and had spoken good words to him, saw the body being carried through the streets and sent his servants to ask who the dead man might be.

“It is but a stranger,” said the black slaves.

“That is no name,” said Suleiman, and again he sent his servants.

‘Then the slaves said : “It is Musa b. Ja’far.”

‘Then Suleiman took the body, and had it washed, and wrapped it in a shroud on which the whole Quran was written, worth one thousand tomans : and he ordered the bazaars to be closed, and all men mourned in Baghdad, and a great crowd of people carried the body of Musa to the burial ground of the Koreish in Kadhimain.

‘But before they buried him they accused Harun of the murder, and he was afraid and denied it.

‘Then they said : “For the Imam there is neither life nor death : we will ask Musa himself.” And they asked the body of Musa how it died, and it put forth a hand from its shroud, and the palm of the hand was bright green because of the strength of the poison.’

Mirza Hussein put out his own hand, dyed with henna, while he saw in his mind’s eye that long procession through the palm groves above Baghdad : for he too knew the Holy Places, and time is no element in the hatreds of the Shi’a.

‘But the Imams,’ said he, ‘are not really in the places of their burial, for they rise from them and leave them on the third day ; and their tombs are only here for remembrance. And the Hidden Imam is among us even now, walking about on the world. I myself have seen him twice.’

‘How was that?’ said I.

‘The first time was at Jaffa, for you know that I embarked there for the Hajj, and as I was walking alone near the edge of the sea, suddenly there was a man where no man had been, and I felt a hotness all over me, and I knew it was the Imam. He said: “Keep thy heart firm, O Hussein, for the World is bad, but thou art among the Good.”’

‘Was that all he said?’ I asked, for the Mirza was so deeply lost in the flattering recollection that the conversation seemed to be coming to an end.

‘That was all,’ said the Mirza, rather hurt. ‘I looked again, and there was no one.’

‘But what did he look like?’ said I.

‘He was a young man, beautiful, white like a Frank.’

‘And how was he dressed?’

‘His clothes?’ said the Mirza, somewhat at a loss and in his heart consigning Western curiosity to the devil. ‘His clothes were European, but’—for I suppose I looked disappointed—‘he had long loose sleeves. And he wore a fez,’ added the Mirza, anxious to make the best of it.

After this peculiar description, which we both felt was not one of the Mirza’s best efforts, we tacitly agreed to drop the external appearance of the Hidden Imam, and I enquired into the second occasion of his manifestation.

‘That was in Mecca,’ said Mirza Hussein, restored to equanimity. ‘As I was walking the “round” with the other hajjis and was near the wall of the House (the Ka’aba), I felt a hand touch me on the shoulder and I felt a hotness all over me, and I knew it was the Imam. And I looked, turning my head, so, and there was a tall young man close behind me; but he said nothing, and when I could look again he was not there.’

‘But when he appears publicly to all men it will be as a shepherd in the land of Mecca: and his sheep will leave him, and he will go to the House (the Ka’aba), and when he reaches the cornerstone he will put out his hand, and a light will rise from his hand and a voice will proclaim him the Khalifa, the Remainder of God. Gabriel will come down to him with seventy thousand angels; and three hundred and thirteen servants will descend riding on clouds above the aeroplanes. It will be a time of prosperity and he will give the Meccans a governor: but they will revolt and kill him, and this will happen seven times until the Imam himself returns

to punish them. And Umar and Abu Bekr—the Imam will take their bodies out of their graves in Medina, and hang them on a dry tree : for they were idolaters.’

The Mirza bent forward to emphasise this astonishing fact, his puny little body strung taut with hatred.

‘Under their cloaks they used to conceal small images of false gods, and Uthman and Khalid b. al-Walid also, and when the Presence the Amir (Ali) mentioned it to the Presence the Messenger (Muhammad) he answered : “I know it. But I will give them time. For if I kill them they will rise up against me on the day of Judgment.” And so the Imam will take them, and hang their bodies on the dry tree, which will burst forth into leaf. And lightning will strike it and turn the two bodies into ashes, and then the winds will come and scatter them in the seas.

‘But as for the Imam, his enemy Sufian will gather an army, and Gabriel will meet him at a place called Badi’, half-way between Mecca and Medina, with an army also, and the earth will open and swallow Sufian’s men. Only two will be left, Bashir and Nazir, and their heads will be turned backwards on their shoulders, and one, Nazir, will return to Sufian to tell him the news of the battle, but Bashir will go with the news to the Imam and his head will be made straight again. Then Jesus will descend, and Moses, and bring each his followers over to Islam : and Satan will be killed. He will fly east, and the Prophet will follow him : and he will fly west, and the Prophet will follow him : and then he will fly straight upward, and half-way between heaven and earth the Presence Muhammad will overtake him and slay him. But the time of the Imam’s appearance no one knows,—and if they say they know, they lie,’ said Mirza Hussein with the ferocity of a truth teller.

‘But I have not told you of the other Imam, who also is buried in the Mosque of Kadhimain, as you know. His name is Muhammad at-Taqqy which is the Godfearing, and he is the son of the Imam Riza of Meshed who was first cherished and then murdered by Ma’mun.

‘Muhammad grew up in Baghdad, and used always to refuse to play with the other children, saying that there was no profit in play and that the Quran forbade it.

‘Now one day as the Caliph Ma’mun came riding by with his court the other boys all fled before him and left the street empty : but Muhammad remained standing there. And the street was narrow, as you know the streets of Baghdad, and when the Caliph

passed he bent down and lifted the boy on to his saddle and asked him why he had not fled like the rest.

"The road was wide enough for both," said the boy, "and I have done no evil to fear thee."

"And who art thou," said Ma'mun, "who speakest so strongly?"

"I am the son of that Riza whom thou didst kill," said Muhammad.

'Then Ma'mun wondered, and thought in his heart that he would bring the boy into his court and give him his own daughter as a bride. And Muhammad was brought to the court, and he was sent with the wise men to the Diwan so that trial might be made of his judgment.

'And when he entered the Diwan, some thieves were standing there who had been condemned to the loss of their hands, but none knew how they were to be cut off, whether at the palm, or the wrist, or the elbow. And they asked Muhammad to decide.

'He said: "These men were my father's enemies and mine. It is not right that I should give judgment upon them."

'Ma'mun prayed him to give judgment notwithstanding, but again Muhammad answered as before.

'Then Ma'mun swore an oath and compelled him to give judgment. And Muhammad said: "The palms of the hands belong to the seven instruments of the worship of God. ('And these,' said Mirza Hussein, 'are the forehead, and the two palms, and the knees, and the two great toes, for they must all touch the ground during the time of prayer.') And," said Muhammad, "these may not be taken from God: therefore the fingers alone may be cut."

'All marvelled at his wisdom, and his wedding with the Caliph's daughter was celebrated, and after the wedding he preached the khutba in the mosque to all the people of Baghdad. And when the khutba was over, he pulled out from the sleeve of his cloak as he stood above the people, silk kerchiefs, one for every man in the mosque. From that day he was known as Jawad, or the Generous. But when he returned to Ma'mun, who was in the palace and had not been to the mosque, he saw that the Caliph was sorrowful because he had missed the silk kerchief, and he pulled one last one out from his sleeve and gave it to him. And they were worth a toman apiece.'

THARAYA.

(To be continued.)

OLD BECK.

BY HUMFREY JORDAN.

IN a west country cider orchard two men, a woman and six dogs enjoyed the sunshine of a late spring afternoon. A mastiff ambled about intent on some stale line of scent which required much investigation, raising his great head occasionally to note his companions' doings. An elkhound bitch ranged widely on her own, ignoring the others. Four little cairns, three dark brindles and a yellow, worked a hedgerow excitedly, jealous of each other's efforts. A seventh dog, a youthful, light-grey cairn bitch, did not enjoy herself at all. She trotted miserably with drooping tail behind the two men and the woman. When the yellow cairn spoke of rabbits with sharp triumphant yells the elkhound showed her pace, and the mastiff left his own investigations. As he galloped towards the find, passing close to the men and the woman, the youthful cairn bitch rolled on her back and lay with her short legs in the air, quaking. One of the men grinned.

'As a seeker after truth,' he began.

'Bill,' the woman interrupted, 'he's going to be funny.'

'I know,' the other man answered. 'But a guest, you know, Betty. Let's have the joke, Tony.'

'There isn't one,' Tony Stanton replied. 'It's grim reality. What would you call it?'

He pointed to the recumbent little dog. She was out of coat unquestionably; in fact she had very little hair upon her thin body. Her skin was a curious colour; her back looked absurdly long; her short legs weak and rickety. About her nerves there could be no question. She lay on her back and goggled; her dark, rather full eyes, bulging with fear. As a working terrier she did not look promising.

'Not "would" I,' Betty Windle stated firmly. 'She is Cora of Lowton, and her breeding is pretty well perfect.'

'High-scented aristocrat,' Stanton said, sniffing delicately.

'She,' Betty informed him, 'has only just recovered from jaundice.'

'Splendid,' Stanton grinned. 'I was afraid it was due to an outcross with a pole-cat.'

'Betty,' Bill Windle declared, 'he has been funny now. Up you get, Becky. The cyclone has passed.'

The small dog rolled on to her feet and stood dejectedly, ready to lie down again at the approach of any vigorous creature.

'I'm glad,' Stanton announced, 'that you have corrected the baptismal error. Cora was clearly a bad joke. Did you—did you part with solid cash for her?'

'Since I'm not a dog thief,' Betty Windle stated, 'I did.'

'My wits are dull to-day,' Stanton apologised. 'Why?'

'Do you,' Windle asked, 'know anything about cairns, Tony?'

'Aren't they,' Stanton answered, 'supposed to be terriers of Scottish origin capable of facing a full-grown active mouse without swooning?'

'Bill,' said Betty Windle, 'he has been funny again.'

But as they helped the small, grey, high-smelling bitch over a hedge, since she refused to attempt to worm her way through it, they discussed dog breeding.

'Damn silly, of course,' Bill Windle agreed. 'You start with a healthy workable sort of type and you distort it for the sake of a fancy shape. Take away its brains and its stamina and its courage by interrelation and announce that you've improved the breed.'

Stanton looked at the little dog who appeared weary in the pleasant spring sunshine.

'Cheer up, Becky,' he suggested. 'Your new master is hurling compliments at you. You've come to a good home.'

The little bitch whined and sat down on the grass.

'But,' Betty Windle declared, 'if you breed them you've got to follow the fashion. People will pay for a well-shaped fool.'

'There is always something attractive in blood,' her husband maintained. 'A well-bred fool is better than an underbred one. Come on, Becky. Have another try at it.'

But the little grey cairn remained seated, shivering although it was not cold, goggling pathetically. At the farther side of a large pasture the other dogs had put up a rabbit and were hunting noisily. Becky took no interest in the hunt but seemed slightly scared of the noise. Her new mistress encouraged her, but she continued to sit and whimper. Left by her human companions she increased the whimper to a whine, her eyes shining with entreaty. Betty Windle walked back and picked her up.

'She's weak after the jaundice,' she stated, shortly.

'Blood will tell, Bill,' Stanton laughed. 'The lady has a decent notion of comfort, anyway. You ought to do something about that smell, though.'

'We'll hope she breeds well,' Windle grunted.

'We will,' his wife replied. 'Has anybody got a cigarette? She fairly reeks and I'm afraid she's a cur. I can't really see her entwining herself round our hearts. They are not going to be torn over her.'

'Scarcely,' Windle agreed. 'There is no reason why her pups should not fetch good prices, Tony. She's a good enough buy. But, if we had been wanting a companion, we should have been done completely.'

And that after many more months was the considered verdict of the Windles on Cora of Lowton. She came to them when she was under six months old. Her age and her condition after jaundice decreed a year's rest before she should be put to her appointed purpose of producing valuable puppies. She clearly enjoyed that year and was as clearly indifferent to other creatures' opinion of her. Until the smell of disease left her, a matter of some weeks, she was isolated in a house of her own but exercised with the other dogs. Her house was comfortable, an old stone-built outhouse, cool in the hot weather and roomy. She did not like leaving it, preferring to lie and sleep or trot about and yap at flies, an amusement which delighted her but irritated her owners. On the same high, penetrating note she could keep up the performance for hours. When she was wakeful at nights, and much sleep by day often made her wakeful, she would practise her accomplishment with gusto. The arrival of an infuriated man or woman at her house in the small hours would send her rolling on her back with pathetic whimpers and nicely simulated terror; but the visit always drove her thoughts from sleep, and she would resume practice at a discreet interval. When her smell was no longer an offence and she was moved into a house with three of the other cairns, the brindle bitches, she gave up her nocturnal performance after a fight in which she got a torn ear. Otherwise, she would probably have found another home.

From the start she was a good doer. She would eat anything, with a slight bias in favour of offal, and eat it quickly. She had her first real beating, about which she made a prodigious fuss, over chickens' entrails from a refuse bin. When with the others she had

her daily feed in the evening she would deal with her own dish violently, absorbing the contents by intensive gulping; then, visibly swollen, she would stand hiccoughing. Having stilled the protests of her stomach, she would slink about casually until one of her small companions turned from a dish to deal with a bone or a morsel which required chewing; the companion's back turned, Becky's nose would be in the dish with creditable despatch. She nearly always managed to steal at least one large mouthful before she was driven off; but, if she were bitten, she screamed. One day she found her way into the mastiff's run at feeding time; while he was crunching a bone she had three satisfying gulps of his supper. Canine chivalry in the matter of sex saved her life, but she did not simulate terror. Held down by an enormous forepaw, with huge jaws enclosing her neck and most of her head, she felt it. After that she avoided the food of larger dogs when they were present.

On fine days, when exercising in the fields, she would for a time run about with pleasure, yapping at birds and insects, trying to attract the attention of the yellow cairn, Weasel, who despised her. In hunting she found no appeal. When she had stretched her legs, running about aimlessly in the vicinity of the man or woman who took her out, she would give up yapping at the winged creatures which passed her by and seek the first chance of unobtrusive disappearance. Home and sleep by way of refuse bins and rubbish heaps would call to her. On wet days she had to be put on a lead, voluntarily she would not have stirred from shelter. Introduced to a rat she fled from it whimpering. She would not even kill a mouse, but was quite ready to steal the body of one which a companion had killed, to mouth it and roll on it.

That the others despised Becky was obvious. Charon, the mastiff, gave her small attention. The elkhound bitch made no secret of her contempt for Becky; but in moments of idleness she enjoyed making a rushing swoop at the cowering object. Brownie, the adult of the three brindle bitches, tolerated a cousin; she was herself a mild little creature, universally friendly in a timid way, but even her mildness vanished when Becky stole her dinner. The other two bitches were adolescent and Becky was able to bully them until they lost their tempers; then she cried off the fight. Weasel repaid her obvious admiration with truculence. When it suited him he played with her, when it did not he bit her. But he was the only house dog, and jealous of his position as unquestioned king of the mixed pack.

In the kennel Becky had no manners. She did not obey the laws which decent dogs observe. A companion's bed was not sacred in her eyes; she would usurp it if she thought it warmer; bones and oddments cherished beneath its straw she would filch. She was dirty to the disgust of animals of nicer instinct. When there were quarrels she started them; but for her cowardice she might have been a fighter. On the arrival of human beings to quell a riot of her initiation she would act the part of a mob's victim with yells and whimpering, sometimes she would limp and lick fancied wounds. In most things she appeared a very perfect cur.

Her coat grew and she filled out into a stocky, good-looking little dog. Beyond the two faults that her eyes were too big and that there was a slight droop in her back she had no blemishes. In shape generally she was well up to the show mark; but her nature spoiled her. She moved cringingly; it was impossible to imagine that she would ever show herself. She looked what she was.

Before she was first put to her appointed purpose the Windles discussed her thoroughly. A year had failed to establish her in their affection. The fact that she had attacked and mauled one of the fat molelike puppies which the elkhound bitch had just weaned had brought the question of getting rid of her under consideration.

'Shall we sell her?' Betty asked.

'No,' Windle decided. 'We'll mate her and see what happens then. Pups might change her nature. Marriage does funny things sometimes.'

'But usually draws the line at miracles,' Betty Windle suggested. 'We'll try her, then. But I shan't weep, if it comes to selling her later.'

So Becky was put to her appointed purpose; and the likelihood of any real change in her character seemed more remote.

When she realised her condition she added extreme fussiness to her other attributes of the complete cur. The Windles had never known a bitch so absurdly careful of herself. She was placed in the house which she had occupied when her smell demanded segregation, and she only left it upon compulsion. Nothing, except force, would induce her to rise in the early morning when the other dogs went out; the day must be thoroughly aired before she wished to walk in it. When, with the other cairn bitches, she was loosed in the old stable yard where she could move about freely and could come to no harm, she sat upon a mounting block snarling and

whimpering when one of her companions approached the foot of her sanctuary. Within a week of her time she collapsed one morning walking slowly across the yard, and lay with her limbs rigid, screaming. Carried to her house and tended carefully she showed every sign of extreme exhaustion; when the veterinary surgeon arrived he failed to make a diagnosis, but he agreed with the owners that Becky was very ill.

'It is,' he stated, 'something that I've never met in a dog before. Guessing, I should say she had had a touch of cramp and that it had frightened her. In a human being you would call that condition pure nerves.'

'Sounds like pure Becky then,' Windle agreed.

'But she is really bad,' Betty Windle insisted, watching the glazed eye and the laboured breathing.

'Bad enough to die,' the vet agreed, 'if she does not pull herself together. I shall be interested to know what happens. Nothing more I can do now.'

But as his car left the stable yard Becky grew tired of nerves. A large bluebottle buzzed about her. Her eye unglazed itself and gleamed with indolent interest; she stretched her limbs comfortably. The bluebottle was joined by a companion, and the brace crawled and buzzed upon the wall. Becky sat up briskly, stepped from her bed, and trotted easily across her house. With obvious satisfaction she found that she was in good voice.

'Lord,' Windle announced, 'we ought to be in for a merry time next week.'

But there Becky surprised her owners. The pains of childbirth did not find her silent, they made her exceedingly angry. There was no doubt of that. Perhaps the reality of the thing and its being unescapable impressed her; anyhow, she did not cringe before it fearfully, she cursed it with the best and most vituperative language at her command. When it was over and three tiny squirming creatures groped blindly about her, she drank warm milk contentedly. Then, having completed with due care the toilet of her offspring, she decided that the affair had been overdone. Quite deliberately she condemned to death the largest of her puppies, pushing it gently but firmly into the cold. The Windles did their utmost to persuade her to reconsider the matter, without success. Becky had positive views on the size of a family. So, being too young for successful human attention, the largest puppy died.

The other two did well. Becky was a competent, though a

very stern mother. She kept her bed as clean, as free from any trace of straw or litter as the most experienced parent could desire ; she developed, indeed, a strong fancy for order. When she was stretching her legs she liked to have her pups ranged neatly side by side in a particular corner of her box, if they crawled, squeaking and clawing in their blindness, to nose a way about an unseen world, she rolled them with her muzzle back into their appointed place and spoke to them grumblingly. She did them well and they grew quickly ; but she appointed the times for feeding and ignored their protests. Her pride in her children was genuine, and she was not jealous of human interest in them. The way she shaped as a mother amazed the Windles.

When the little creatures had opened their eyes and were tottering about on weak legs, climbing out of their box, seeking exploration, Becky began to find them a nuisance. Her sternness increased, her pride in them gave place to irritation. In less than four weeks she weaned them, and nothing would induce her to take them again to her care. So far as she was concerned, the business was definitely finished ; the world had other interests. The pups were reared by hand and Becky passed from the nursery atmosphere into an adult world again.

'It's an abominable nuisance,' Windle admitted, 'but next time she may do better. Anyhow the two do her credit.'

'They're a fine pair,' Betty Windle agreed. 'Still, if she's going to be a bad mother the first time she's hardly likely to improve. Being bored with her first litter is pretty rotten of her.'

Becky, however, felt no shame in the matter. Meeting her children after she had done with them, she would exhibit signs of mild pleasure. A game with them amused her for a time, but any idea on their part that she was still a nursing mother was at once corrected. When her only son died of an infantile ailment she did not appear to notice his absence, certainly she never mourned for him. Her daughter, showing signs that she might become a beauty, came in due course to share her mother's house. Becky filched her bones and ousted her upon occasions from her bed ; kept her in her place and set a strict limit on the extent of her childish play ; yet she was never on unfriendly terms with her. The daughter was sold to America before she was six months old. Becky witnessed the departure, saw her child go off in a box, with perfect equanimity.

The Windles did not want her to imitate Brownie, who carried

maternal affection beyond the limits of sense, but they hoped that Becky might develop something resembling a sense of duty to her young. She was improving; her experience of motherhood had changed her; she was young.

On her first appearance amongst the adult dogs after she had whelped she no longer cringed. Charon galloped up to her, welcoming an acquaintance whom he had not seen for a considerable time; Becky met him standing on her legs, tail carried high, a certain perkiness about her. When he exhibited interest in the puppy smell which clung to her, she bit him on the cheek and trotted off importantly. The mastiff appeared surprised, not annoyed; lumbering, he invited her to a game. With something of jauntiness in her manner she refused.

'Did you see that?' Windle asked his wife.

'I did,' she answered. 'She looks almost like a terrier. But I wish she would feed her pups.'

A week later Becky surprised her owners again. Up on the downland above her home she put up a hare; and for about four yards she hunted it. Having realised the futility of the proceeding she returned to the form which she investigated with great excitement, inhaling the scent of the late occupant eagerly. She did not raise her voice, but the other dogs had seen the hare, chased it and lost it. As they joined in her investigation she bit left and right. It was her find and she was jealous of it.

That seemed the form which motherhood had found for her. Directly she had got back her coat and her figure after whelping she appeared to realise that she was smart. Perkiness, conceit and jealousy marked her. She liked attention, especially from human creatures; when strangers said that she was good looking she was quick to gather their meaning, and would pose for admiration complacently. Wandering in the woods and fields about her home she learned to busy herself with the occupations of the other dogs, to hunt because by hunting she could keep herself in the centre of the stage. When she put up a rabbit or a hare, or found a line of scent that her companions had missed, she would pursue the natural business of a terrier with, as it were, three-quarters of her mind, but the other quarter active to make sure that her prowess was attracting the requisite amount of attention. Scuttling after her quarry she would find time to glance round and satisfy herself that eyes were turned in her direction. If she wanted help she would call for it loudly, undergrowth that was too thick for her liking

would set her yelling for a less careful hunter, but she was slow to respond to a companion's demand for assistance. After a kill, although she might have been out of the hunt altogether, she invariably claimed the credit. With Becky walking round the body, head and tail erect, dark eyes and darker muzzle smirking with satisfaction, it was difficult to imagine that any other dog had had any part in the proceedings.

'She's by no means the cur she was,' Windle maintained at that stage of her career. 'If she wasn't so infernally conceited and jealous of her betters, she might make a good working terrier.'

'I feel,' his wife answered, 'that I should like to like her. But she is altogether too much of the flashy wench. Shall we show her and see what happens?'

So, by way of amusement, Becky was entered for a show. The excursion into a wider world delighted her. She went with a companion, one of the elkhound puppies whom she had mauled, a young dog christened Viking but generally called Lop. Lop had once been to London and brought back a first prize. He hated the whole business; Becky gloried in it. As side by side with a dejected elkhound she was led into a large hall massed with dogs and hideous with noise she stepped high and daintily in her delight. To show the nature of the spirit which uplifted her, in joy not in malice, she had a nip at the vet who examined her on entering. Her bench with its wire network sides through which she could look in either direction down long rows of strange dogs was a place of pure happiness for her. Directly she was tied up on it she started to rouse her neighbours with the pleasantest results. By simulating fury at her bars she introduced a decent gala spirit into the affair. Within a very short time she had her section of benching contributing more than its share to the general noise. At the urgent request of an exhibitor on her right Becky was taken for a walk, her neighbours vacillating between hysteria and exhaustion. Her walk took her amongst crowds, which delighted her, to a large open space surrounded by chairs in which elkhounds, led by anxious owners, walked in a circle. Amongst the elkhounds Becky perceived Lop, playing with extreme reluctance the part of Viking; she greeted him on a penetrating note. Lop turned his head at her voice. Shame at his position overcame him; he uncurled his tail and looked piteous. Bill Windle got between him and the judge and by secret entreaties induced him to curl his tail again, to hide for a moment his shame. Betty Windle picked up Becky and silenced

her. As Lop, completely overcome by the humiliation of being made a public spectacle, slunk after his master and a first-prize card back to his bench amongst the elkhounds, Becky, quivering with pleasure, accompanied him.

Back on her own bench she discovered a joy which rivalled stirring up her neighbours. The crowd filing slowly past her could, she found, be induced to make flattering remarks. A small cairn had only to look at them with large eyes, to pose, to show interest in them and they responded with open admiration. Her neighbours forgotten, she was busy seeking compliments when her time came for the judging ring. As she paraded round on her first public appearance Becky, her mistress maintained, had no shadow of doubt that she was a winner. Her carriage was perfect; her assurance supreme; her excitement high. When the judge was occupied with individual examination Becky, her mood being exuberant, attacked a rival standing next to her. She was pulled up short on her lead and did not get her teeth home, but she broke the rival's nerve at a critical moment and lost her what looked like a certain place in the award list. The judge's familiarity with her mouth displeased Becky; she replied vigorously and managed by luck to draw blood. She did not get a card of any colour, although the judge explained to Betty Windle that his bleeding finger had nothing to do with that. Her eyes and the droop in her back had; although her powers of showing herself as a terrier had nearly outweighed them. Becky left the ring thoroughly content, very obviously aware of her own beauty. She was not shown again. But that splendid day had placed her differently with her owners.

'There must,' Windle declared, 'be something in an animal that is so thoroughly pleased with itself.'

'Two glaring show faults,' Betty Windle stated. 'So far a splendid breeder but a rotten mother. A bundle of increasing flashiness and quite unwarranted conceit. Yet there is something behind, Bill. I wish she would hurry up and out with it.'

They tried her twice more as a mother. On each occasion she produced a litter of fine pups which pleased her for a week or two, which bored her afterwards. At her second whelping she deserted her children after three weeks, at her third and last a fortnight was enough for her. Becky's record at stud was simple: she buried them all but one.

After her last exhibition of maternal callousness, when she was

four years old, the question of her future came up for decision. The Windles were giving up breeding. Charon had died. The elkhound bitch and Brownie had gone to other carefully chosen homes. Weasel, the unquestioned king, Lop, whose love of living, except in the public eye, made him a benefactor to any human being of understanding, Gill, a cairn bitch, whose passionate devotion to the country-side about her home made her transplantation unthinkable, and Becky remained. In the reduced pack there was no place for any dog who had not some real claim on the affection of the master or the mistress. The point for settlement was whether Becky had any such claim. Common sense, shorn of commoner sentimentality, denied it to her. To maintain that either of their hearts would be wrung by her departure was beyond the Windles. To suggest that Becky would feel regret at removal to another comfortable home was absurd. The sensible course was to send her to one or other of the many people who admired her and would be kind to her. That course was in theory adopted and in practice delayed. The Windles apologised to each other for the delay, calling it stupid weakness. Then after a summer night's walk they ceased to speak of getting rid of Becky.

On a midsummer night, England having decided to show a moment of the most perfect climate in the world, the Windles realised that going to bed would be a crime against the generosity of nature. Having pottered about their garden through the loveliness of dusk and twilight, watching the slow metamorphosis of tints on blossom and lawn and lichen-covered stone, listening to the birds chattering the finish of their day, they waited for night. A rook in a tall elm, settling itself slowly, had the last word, then the creatures of the darkness took command of the hour. The Windles decided that the time was right for visiting fairy rings on the uplands above their home, or more mundanely to discover whether the moon would show them a badger. Dogs could not be taken if the shy folk of the night were to remain undisturbed, so the dogs were shut up. Weasel, aware that he was being left behind, resentful but resigned, put himself to bed on an old skirt in his mistress's bedroom; Lop and Gill and Becky, appealing in face of the folly that robbed them of nocturnal adventure, were shut in the house and yard which they shared. Low whimpering as their master and mistress left them announced their protest against man's misuse of power.

As Bill Windle and his wife climbed a steep rough lane leading

to a long belt of larch and fir which edged the brow of the uplands, the night was scenting wonderfully. There was no wind, no stirring of leaf or grass, a complete stillness of the air in which the smallest sounds, the faintest smells, seemed active. The moon, well up in the eastern sky, caressed the country-side, wedding mystery to shadow, giving colour to blackness. Pale stars in a clear sky looked down on a magic world. Walking quickly, the Windles skirted the end of the covert and emerged from the lane into the open some way beyond it. As they moved across short, cushioned upland turf a small shadow detached itself from the blurred undergrowth of hedgerow and followed them. Annoyed, they waited for it. It came to them on quieter feet than theirs. Becky, her escape without the others following her unexplained, showed no shame, only determination and a quivering excitement. Since the purpose of the excursion was to observe alert and fearful creatures, discipline had to be silent. There was nothing to do but return home with the offender or take a chance that she would be awed by her crime into keeping quiet. So the man and woman signed to her to keep to heel. She obeyed them, taking her place behind. They approached the belt of larch and firs by a fold in the ground; when they got near to the end of the fold they began to crawl. Becky drew level with them; her eyes glistened in the moonlight, her jaws worked slightly, but she obeyed the rule of silence more skilfully than her companions. On the lip of the fold in the ground, sheltered by a clump of whin, the party halted; the Windles lay flat; Becky stood, trembling, just in front of them. Bill Windle touched her hind leg and signed to her; she turned her head and her eyes shone. Then she gave herself to watching, a small creature consumed by the quivering fires of excitement.

A few yards away the dark wall of the wood rose to the sky; in the warm night the smell of it was something as tangible as its massed shadows. Quite close within its shelter was the network of borings of the main badgers' earth. The watchers waited; Becky, a quivering statue, swallowing silently. Without any heralding of sound, coincident with a stronger smell, two points of red glowed at the edge of the wood. Becky stiffened and ceased to quiver. Something vague, large and squat shaped in the shadows; a striped head showed and moonlight was reflected in suspicious eyes. The shy beast, that few men ever see at liberty, had come. The Windles held their breaths; Becky made no sound; but the badger had found them. He was there, his head

exposed facing them ; then he was gone. A dry twig snapped ; there was a stronger taint of wild thing in the air ; underground a heavy body moved rapidly. Becky did not stir ; she remained rigid except for the quick working of her jaws. Then she sighed, as though ecstasy were painful.

Windle stood up.

'She didn't spoil it, anyway,' he whispered.

'The best of the three of us,' Betty Windle whispered back. 'But not good enough for Mr. Brock all the same. We'll see what is doing round the other side.'

They walked on quietly along the length of the wood. Becky a yard or so ahead of them, alert but not perky, moving her head quickly from side to side, observing but making no move to find her own way into the night, a small dog seeing a new world with wonder, clearly overcome by the occasion. At the farther end of the covert the Windles stopped. Becky stood still.

From the crest of the hill the ground sloped steeply. Before them was a vast panorama, hill and vale, woodland, pasture and stream, stretching to distant hills. Beyond the hills, unseen but lending its clearness in reflection to the sky, was the wide sea. A familiar landscape to the watchers, but touched by the hour and the moon to a new picture, very quiet and very beautiful. A sleeping face yet not asleep. From the scattered villages there was neither sight nor sound of men, but the still night was full of business. Cattle and resting horses moved in the fields, their soft breathing coming to the ears of the watchers like a noticeable disturbance. There were little rustlings faint and disguised, the thudding of rabbits leaving or entering their buries. In the light and shadow of the rolling vale below the owls were talkative ; a night-jar called harshly beyond the covert. The smells of hay and flowers detached themselves from the warm breath of the night, passed on the stillness, were lost and found again. The sickly scent of animal decay grew strong, an offence to beauty, lingered and faded. There was no wind in that world of gentle peace, yet even the air was busy with comings and goings, pretending sleep to hide activity. From out of the softness of the moonlight a voice spoke urgently, and was answered. Down by Freeman's Wood a fox barked and the vixen replied. Domesticity, an ordered, crowded, cultivated land, had no real claim upon those voices ; their gruffness belonged by right to the jungle, to older, wilder things. The man and woman glanced at each other without speaking, pleased.

Becky stood by them, absorbed. They moved on in the shadow of the covert and she followed them.

The rabbits were trusting on that night, few of them gave more than casual attention to the two human creatures and the overawed little dog; well out in the open, their scuts bobbing in the moonlight, they fed and hopped about. At the lower corner of the covert there was a rank taint of fox; yet the rabbits did not seem to heed it. The Windles and Becky, using caution, turned the angle of the wood and sat down behind the shelter of a thorn bush. Somewhere close to them the lord of the English night was out and about, but they could not see him.

Then Betty Windle touched her husband on the arm and pointed. Becky, seeing the movement, gazed, and gazing stiffened into immobility again. Well out in the sloping grass field in front of them several rabbits were feeding in a scattered group. Below and beyond the church and the village nestled amongst shadowy trees. It was a pleasant picture of summer, almost a picture of peace. Yet one of the rabbits was uneasy, it fed but not with the assurance of the others. Reluctantly, it would seem, it edged away from its companions towards a cup in the ground. That at first was all, a rabbit for some reason unexplained ill at ease, obeying something to which it gave obedience grudgingly. Then from the cup in the ground two sharp points appeared and waited motionless under the moon. The rabbit hopped a little nearer to them, a little farther from its companions. The points rose and eyes flashed beneath them. A dog fox raised his head; and the rabbit answered the strange summons with another reluctant hop. A curious nocturnal pantomime: the lord commanding, the unwilling victim bowing to a stronger mind. Intent on his work the fox remained with his head exposed, his mask showed very clearly in the soft light, beautiful, keen, alert. His eyes were on the rabbit of his choice, which obeyed him but refused to face the danger. Another hop, and the fox crouched for his spring. The night was so still that the smallest sound had separate existence in it; yet the other rabbits did not move. Then the fox turned his head sharply and faced towards the watchers, suspicious but not certain, unhurried, certainly unafraid. He rose to his feet, showing his body and his brush. The rabbit of his choice squatted still, the others took no notice. For a moment the fox remained undecided, standing motionless, his commands not withdrawn, his suspicions not confirmed; then he began to move, slowly and with lithe grace. The uneasiness of

his chosen victim vanished, it hopped a yard towards its undisturbed companions, put down its nose and cropped at the grass. The fox walked on, his head turned towards the watchers; the moon showed him without timidity, disturbed but arrogant and calmly observant. Treading the grass as though he floated on it, making no slightest sound he passed amongst that group of rabbits. He halted once, confirming his suspicions again, and the rabbits were on every side of him giving no attention to his passage. Walking not trotting, his head always turned in the direction from which disturbance might come, wariness and disdain, activity and grace blended in his movements, he went towards the covert. Like some Medusa on whose face they must not look the rabbits let him go unperceived. At the edge of the wood he halted again still facing the watchers; his head was raised and he took the wind of them. Then with a swiftness almost magic he whisked round, his brush flickered in the moonlight, and he was gone. There was no sound of his going; the rabbits hopped and fed.

'Jove,' Windle said, 'that was worth coming out to see.'

He spoke in a low whisper; but his voice frightened the rabbits who had allowed a fox to move amongst them. They scuttled towards their buries. Becky broke silence for the first time that night; she gave a little whimpering sigh as though the exquisite joy of the occasion were too much for her. But on the way home she made no attempt to wander from her companions.

Her reading of the message of that midsummer night she kept as her own secret; but it clearly worked a change in her, altered many values. After that stolen hour of wonder she faced things differently. Her individuality was something which no call of nature could cause her to surrender; but a deeper instinct was thenceforth wedded to her pleasure. Lop beat her easily in activity and the eager expression of joy in living; Gill shamed her in tirelessness; Weasel had a gift of command which she could never show; but in the love of hunting she had no rival. Unobtrusively, after that magic night, she developed the craft of her ancestors. Her flashiness waned, her taste for human flattery and admiration disappeared, her absorption in the things of the country-side commanded her, but first and foremost she was always Becky.

Her habits of rising were typical of her as a working dog. When her master or mistress came to let her out in the early morning she might be briskly waiting at the gate of the yard, although the day was wet and cold. Equally, on a fine morning she might have

decided for a longer sleep, when she would flop her short tail, yawn noisily, and curl up in her box with nice determination. The same thing applied to hunting: one day she would show eagerness and skill, another without ostensible reason the completest indolence. On her indolent days she would stroll the fields in the vicinity of her human escort, smart and jaunty, for she always carried herself with a decent conceit, watching other dogs' activities with mild interest. If she trod on a sharp stone or a thorn she would squeak loudly, turning to look at the thing which had hurt her with much indignation. She might not choose to hunt as she might not choose to get from her bed in the mornings, but when she chose her mind went into the business. Where other dogs gave energy she gave thought. Very often her hard-working companions would drive a rabbit or a rat from cover to where Becky, waiting composedly, was ready for it. She killed with style, hating a bungler's job, and she liked killing. Those excellent persons who place the lap dog and the fireside pet in the forefront of the canine world would have approved of Becky on her days of indolence, although they might have found her a little lacking in unselfish devotion; on the occasions, more numerous than the others as the years passed her, when she triumphed over inbreeding and obeyed the natural instincts of her kind, they would probably have considered her a savage and degraded little beast. But Becky's use for those excellent sentimentalists would on all occasions have been small.

Children, her own history as a mother demonstrated, did not attract her. As a nursery pet she could never have attained success. Her rule with her own families had been to punish immediately any tiresomeness. With human young she applied her rule; she nipped, it was not honestly a bite, children who teased her; she did not damage, but the practice was discouraged by all nurses and most mothers. So when Becky was introduced to the son and heir of the Windles she had to face a problem. The application of her nursery rule led to trouble, yet the small boy seemed drawn to dogs and liked to handle them. A difficult situation, but Becky met it with success. She discovered that the child hated being licked; the rest was easy. The boy's exuberant overtures were met by a small cairn standing up and smearing his face with her tongue. After that attention there was never any tiresomeness. Becky and the boy were excellent but undemonstrative friends; and he served her as the basis for a useful experiment. By way of the nursery she introduced herself temporarily as a house dog. Weasel objected

to that at first and made himself unpleasant, but Becky had long since ceased to be sycophantic to any dog. She admired Weasel, within limitations; she admitted his titular claim to rule; she laughed at his tantrums. But human houses did not really attract her; she was not ill at ease in them like her companion Lop. They had no power of overawing her as they overawed Gill; she simply found them inconvenient. Armchairs and fires in cold weather pleased her; the coming and going about such things did not. She preferred her own box in her own house which had none of the qualities of a communal shelter. Upon occasions she would find her own way into the house and seek temporary seclusion and quiet on an armchair or even a bed, but only upon occasions and seldom in response to direct invitation.

Once more, after they had ceased to talk about getting rid of her, the Windles tried to breed from Becky. They mated her with Weasel. Probably because a dog can do the simple sum of two and two she was a reluctant bride; but her owners hoped for the best. In due course her figure flattered their hopes, but a brood of young ducklings was found to be disappearing. When this was proved a matter of cause and effect, Becky's views on families were respected. She was never caught at the duck business again, but there was always doubt and suspicion when young birds disappeared.

That the suspicion lurked, the Windles had to confess, marked a definite change in Becky's status. There had been a time when the excuse of that suspicion would have been readily accepted: the grey bitch would have gone to another home. But there had been a time when Becky was a well-bred cur. She was not thin; a healthy appetite and habits of periodic indolence were against that, but she looked fatter than she was. Her grey brindle coat was luxuriant, giving her an appearance of broad squatness almost like the badgers who were her unobtrusive neighbours. With maturity the spring and assurance had not left her carriage; her walk still attracted the attention which she no longer sought. She was far too absorbed in her own affairs, too occupied even on her days of indolence with matters of interest to herself to have much time for other people; yet she would always meet a greeting or a word of admiration with a friendly preoccupied smile. Her relations with her three companions had become of the nicest; she would help the others when they were slow with their dinners, but you could no longer call it stealing. Bickering, quarrels and interferences she avoided. When Weasel was truculent and demanded official

recognition of his unquestioned rule she gave it, pretending respect for him ; a dispute over an old bone or a sunny spot on which to lie found Becky self-effacing, yet she often finished with the bone or on the spot. At six years old the high-smelling, cringing, cowardly little nuisance that had come to the Windles was long buried in forgotten history.

Like many of her kind Becky had a glaring and a dangerous fault. As apart from obeying one, she would not answer a call. Occasionally she got shut in a shed or a room ; when her absence was noticed and search was made for her she would resolutely refuse to inform the seekers of her presence by any sound. The car in the coachhouse was usually a safe draw, if Becky were missing ; given the opportunity she would settle herself on the back seat in the hope of making certain of a ride when the vehicle was next used. She passed some hours in a box with a nervous hunter, and it was the horse not the dog that made known where she was. The ladder to the loft had to be changed from one with flat rungs to one with round, because she liked to climb up and secure privacy and seclusion on a nest of hay. But whether she chose to secrete herself, or whether she were shut in inadvertently she would remain obstinately silent until found.

Soon after her life had been revolutionised by a stolen mid-summer night excursion she took to going to ground. Nobody supposed that she was seeking foxes or badgers in their earths ; she never went very far nor stopped very long in subterranean passages ; but she liked a short trip underground. When she emerged, earth stained and often sneezing, she had the appearance of considerable self-satisfaction. Weasel and Gill would not face the bowels of the earth ; Lop could not, being far too large. Becky was pleased to exhibit her accomplishment before the others. The Windles did not like it, knowing the danger attaching to the business. But they recognised a point when a regard for others' safety becomes a menace to the happiness of all the parties concerned. So they let it go at discouragement and hoping for the best.

Then in the summer of Becky's seventh year what they had feared happened.

In the twilight of a May evening the four dogs and the man and woman had been enjoying life upon the uplands round and about the larch and fir covert known, unreasonably, as New Gorse. When the time for home arrived Becky was absent ; she did not come to insistent calling. Traps could be eliminated on two counts : the

owner of that land would not tolerate the infernal contrivances and Becky silent in a trap was unthinkable. Then Betty Windle remembered that the grey bitch had last been seen in the covert nosing around a fox's earth. So the party returned to the wood, and the other dogs were asked to say whether the entrance to the earth held any trace of their missing companion; but they would give no opinion about that. Excited and made to bark their voices extracted no answer from the earth. Calls and whistling also failed. The thought of a small creature imprisoned in the dark was not pleasant; the man and woman did not speak of it. Windle went back, taking the other dogs with him; his wife remained by the earth. In less than half an hour he returned alone, with a spade and a lantern. The dusk had given way to night. There was no moon and the stars were covered with a light rack of cloud; it was very dark.

'Well?' Windle asked, speaking to a recumbent shadow.

'She's there,' Betty answered. 'Far down. Something's wrong with her. She must want us badly because she'll answer now.'

Windle took his wife's place on the ground; his head in the entrance of the earth he called, listening. From deep in the hillside there was a faint crying; it was hard to locate, but the note of urgency and appeal was clear in it.

'Right, Beck, old girl, right,' Windle called. 'Quiet, girl. We aren't going to leave you.'

He lit the lantern and turned to Betty Windle.

'Useless to try to dig her out till it's light. With this damned thing we couldn't see the way the passages go or anything. Might let the whole place in on her.'

'Yes. There's no fox with her, though.'

'No. Something to occupy her if there was.'

'Yes.'

They called again and listened. To their imagination the faint answer was more urgent, the appeal in it desperate. They tried digging and brought in the roof of a passage, cutting themselves off from the sound of that faint call. When they had cleared the passage and established connection again they dared not risk further exploration in the dark.

Somewhere beneath them, unmolested by the creatures whose home she had invaded, but certainly captured and held, Becky asked their aid. She might be crushed and suffocating slowly;

she might have been mauled by a fox and left to die in her dark prison. That they could not tell ; but they could tell that a small dog was calling in vain to them, a small dog whose slow growth to sturdy individuality had pleased them. Soon after midnight, listening miserably, they heard a snarling and worrying. At first, scared at their horrid impotence, they imagined a fox's attack ; then they read that faint message more truly. There was not two voices but one. Beck, despairing of the help that was promised but did not come, was fighting a last fight, in loneliness. Before her strength gave out she was trying, madly, desperately, fiercely to free herself, meeting her prisoner's death not with whimpers but with rage. When that snarling and worrying had ceased there was no answer to their calls.

After several vain attempts to make the little dog speak again to her, Betty Windle stood up.

'Once,' she stated, 'I said that Beck would never tear our hearts.'

By way of answer, to cover the break in his wife's voice which did not shame her, Windle cursed the slow-coming day with fluency.

Just before dawn the earth beneath them gave out sounds again, not answers to their repeated calling but something continuous, half whine half moan. They imagined Becky delirious, beyond hearing promises that were not fulfilled ; but they were thankful that she lived.

When they got to her after two hours of hard digging they found her caught between two roots. She was very exhausted, but as she sighted them, peering at her down a passage of the earth, her eyes laughed and they could hear her short tail flop.

As a dishevelled man and woman, much earthstained, made their way home, a small cairn bitch, camouflaged to blend with the local soil, preceded them. The clear freshness of the morning had revived her ; she moved a little stiffly but with a decent jauntiness.

'Look here, old Beck,' Windle declared, 'if this sort of thing pleases you, you can get some other brand of damfool to give you a home.'

But none of the three imagined any real meaning in the silly threat.

HARLEQUIN WORLD.

BY WINIFRED F. PECK.

I.

'WELL, Camilla! Where have you been?'

Mrs. Carey blushed guiltily and clasped Billy's hand tightly, as she found her husband confronting her at the bus stop. Nature had given her an aristocratic face and bearing, but the experience of twenty-five years of married life had added a strangely apologetic manner.

'To the Zoo, Daddy,' answered Billy. There was nothing apologetic about Mrs. Carey's youngest boy: at the age of eight he had come to realise that he was the commonplace member of a brilliant family, and he was glad of it.

'The Zoo?' For the hundredth time Mrs. Carey realised as she boarded the bus, with her family, how unsuited was her Montague for this jostling, suburban world. She had never outgrown a sense of inadequacy towards her own name. Never had she felt worthy to inherit the alliteration of her great-aunt Camilla Carey, the great poetess before whom the England of a hundred years ago had burnt clouds of incense. But when Montague Pendrel on his marriage consented to adopt her name, in recognition of her seniority in descent of the world-famous Carey family, he achieved a name which most perfectly expressed his personality. His rare poise, the cynical smile which twisted his thin lips, the beautiful modulation of his voice, every inch of his slim graceful figure, accorded with the high-sounding address of Montague Pendrel Carey.

'Why don't you like it, Dads?' asked Billy. 'It's such fun and the animals are so awfully like people.'

'I am not overfond of people,' said Montague, distastefully avoiding the fish-basket of his neighbour. 'Animals have of course more scientific interest, but then, unfortunately, I have only a bowing acquaintance with Science.'

And that, as Mrs. Carey recognised, was enough to condemn Science.

'The Aquarium's ripping,' said Billy. 'We saw you all there—you and Merlin and Vivian I mean. There are fishes called Harle-

quins who swim about in a very small, lovely tank, looking very proud and unlike other people, and doing nothing at all.'

'Billy, don't talk nonsense,' said his mother energetically. 'Your father works very hard to support us all.' If, even as she spoke, there passed through her mind a vision of her husband's old school reports—'Very promising but unequal'—'clever but inaccurate . . . brilliant but needs application . . .' she suppressed the thought. Montague had work as a publisher's reader: in creative literature he had pursued an apprenticeship of ideals for fifty odd years.

'I suppose you extend this aquatic responsibility to our morals and behaviour,' said Montague as they left the bus at last, and Mrs. Carey blushed again. Was it Montague's unerring penetration which made her persist in the foolish habit? How could he imagine the thoughts she suppressed? It was true, though she had shed many tears when her cheerful commonplace eldest born, John, departed with his regiment to India: though she worked her aristocratic fingers somewhere near the bone, and wore out her feet in walking and playing with her youngest son Billy, when he was not at his little day school—that neither of them had ever cost her the anxiety she felt for her brilliant husband and the twins, Merlin and Vivian. Merlin, after a mediocre career at Harrow, had failed to make Oxford possible by attaining a scholarship, and was now teaching discontentedly by day in a preparatory school, and burning midnight oil over exquisite and exiguous essays. Vivian, through her father's influence, had obtained a secretaryship with an authoress in London whom she frankly despised, and spent her evenings and week-ends in alternate bursts of frivolity, and dark hours spent in the composition of very modern poetry. To either of them the simple rules of duty and unselfishness with which Camilla regulated her own life would have seemed as remote as their forgotten grammars and arithmetic books. Monty always had been their inspiration and companion, she herself their universal provider and servant. She had not managed her life very successfully, decided Mrs. Carey, as she toiled, with her husband, up the hot suburban avenue to their home. Alone she would have distracted herself by noting the new net curtains in 'Torquemada,' the baby in 'Mon Repos,' the crimson rambler in 'Glenfinnan,' but Montague's restrained contempt for his surroundings made her own normal little amusements impossible. It was depressing, indeed, at times to live with a family who were possessed of such aristocratic and luxurious tastes with no sort of capacity for earning the money which would indulge them.

'At last!' Montague sighed with relief as they left the road for the garden, in which his lavender bushes, pale scabious and white jasmine announced a retreat from the blatant little geranium beds of the neighbourhood. 'At last my island aquarium shuts me in again, Thetis or Caliban as you will!'

'Oh, Dads, it's too hot for Meredith phrases!' Vivian's face appeared at the drawing-room window, white, starry and pointed as the jasmine which surrounded it. 'Come in quickly! There's tea, and a letter which is tantalising beyond endurance. It looks like legacies and bankruptcies and publisher's acceptances all in one, and it's probably an advertisement of wire netting. Mother dear, you and Billy shouldn't carry all those parcels.'

But who else was to carry them, reflected Mrs. Carey as she sternly put aside the temptation to the tea-table and ordered herself into the kitchen? There she gave parcels and instructions to the little maid, and congratulations on the progress of the jam. She forced her tired feet upstairs to put out Monty's evening clothes in his room, tidy Vivian's and retrieve a silk stocking which wanted mending. She looked into Merlin's room to see that his tennis flannels were in order, and put on Billy's tiny dressing-table the little toys she had been weak-minded enough to buy for him. Then with relief she took off her dusty shoes and tiring hat in her hot bedroom. The room was the smallest in the house, since its three literary inhabitants needed space and coolness to protect them from insomnia. It was an odd little place, for the worn ivory brushes with the coronet, left her by some great-aunt, the water-colours and photos, and priceless Spode toilet set, seemed to demand the deep, comfortable bedroom of a country house, with a big billowy bed in one corner, and big billowy trees in the park outside. Some women, as they saw reflected in the mirror, the tall slender figure, beautifully cut lined face and greying golden hair which made a natural coronet, might have felt that their autumnal beauty demanded a better setting, but Mrs. Carey was incapable by nature of conceit or morbidity alike. Already she was reproaching herself for her unspoken criticisms of her family this afternoon.

'Well, where's the letter?' she asked cheerfully, as she entered the drawing-room. She had always regretted a little the severity with which Vivian and Merlin had, a few years ago, banished the crowded, beautiful jetsam of her family inheritances as inchoate junk, preserving only the valuable Lawrence and a few marvellous pieces of glass and china in a vivid significant setting. But to-day,

cool, empty and green, it was welcoming enough, even if the analogy of the world under the sea returned once more to her mind. Then she realised that Montague had opened her letter, and that the carefully repressed excitement in his manner, and Vivian's, meant that some sensational news awaited her. The flashing, brilliant fish of Billy's analogy were darting about with excitement and purpose now.

'Adela Carey is very ill—dying,' said Montague abruptly. 'This is from the lawyer, suggesting you should go at once. He encloses a few unimportant papers for you as well.'

Camilla Carey poured out her tea mechanically, stunned into silence. For so many years the family had awaited this news, even hoped for this news, Camilla feared, that by this time its arrival was almost unexpected.

'Ought I to go at once?' she asked vaguely, turning her thoughts resolutely from any secondary considerations.

'I suppose it means,' said Vivian with no such restraint, 'that our ship—isn't that the phrase?—is really coming in at last?'

'Poor old soul! Perhaps she'll get over this attack,' said her mother warmly.

'My dear!' Montague put down his cup severely. 'Let's be sensible. It's fifty years since your great-aunt Camilla left her cottage and property to you, as her eldest great-niece, with the life enjoyment of them to her companion and adopted daughter, Adela. She was thirty then, and she has kept the Carey family out of the inheritance all these years. It would be false sentiment to hope—'

'Yes, and she can't be getting much good out of life,' put in Vivian. 'And at last we shall get some good out of being Careys! What a torment it's been all these years!'

'Torment?' queried her father, raising delicate eyebrows.

'Yes, darling. At school the mistresses always told me my essays weren't worthy of a Carey. The girls always called me "Young Bud of April," after that dreadful poem of hers in all the anthologies. Even publishers regret that one of our family should write in a style they wouldn't have liked in 1850! How much money will it be, Mums?'

'I don't know,' said Mrs. Carey shortly. 'And I didn't know people still read her poems.'

There, it appeared, she was quite wrong, and Montague and Vivian enjoyed putting her right. Together, with the brilliance in conversation which somehow refused to creep into their writings, they

estimated the position of the Careys in literature. Their name did indeed, they agreed, stand for something great and permanent in England. About the year 1800 John Carey, owner of a small property in Westmorland, sat down in his little grey Manor House to write a poem on the Deluge. It was verse 'pour rire,' as Monty said, but it won him the friendship of the Lake Poets. His house became their centre, his purse was at their command and amongst them his daughter, Camilla, grew up into brilliant, entrancing womanhood. She too sat down and wrote, if on less majestic themes, and young ladies in ringlets and crinolines, whiskered officers in the army, hard-headed publishers and German philosophers, made pilgrimages to her home in the mountains to lay their admiration at her neat sandalled little feet. 'She was one of those unique writers who become Queen of Highbrows and Mistress of Low Brows,' said Montague—'Oh no, darling, not mistress!' laughed Vivian . . . 'An unfortunate phrase,' conceded Monty—'Let us say Paragon of Low Brows. To combine the rôles is to achieve immortality and a competence.' Her rare gifts, her devotion to her father, the throne to which she was raised by contemporary poets, the virginal beauty of her soul, had all passed into a great English literary tradition before John Carey died. The old house was sold, the lands squandered by an extravagant brother, but in a cottage on the estate Camilla Carey lived on with her companion and adopted daughter, Adela, wearing, till her death in extreme old age, the halo of her marvellous past. She died in 1860, happy, said Montague, in the opportunity of her death, before the materialism of Victorian England submerged her school of poetry. 'Her eyesight had gone before she could read Darwin bowdlerised by Tennyson, her hearing before she could be deafened by Browning drumming out his guttural German philosophies.' From that dark valley, literature, according to Vivian, had emerged. Carey, Camilla and the Lake Poets, sat once more on the heights of Olympus. Much had still to be done to reinstate Camilla Carey. It was as a literary inheritance, as well as from a more material point of view, that Montague showed his elation to-day. Long ago he had attempted to extract from Adela Carey, the heiress, leave to investigate the papers in Basswaite Cottage. At her gently determined refusal all communication between the families had ceased, 'and now,' said Montague, 'you can hardly blame me if I look, not for dead men's shoes, but a dead woman's bureau.'

Mrs. Carey heeded them very little. Her mind was set on the

poor, lonely, little old lady who lay so far away across the hills, facing the last great battle of life. Pitifully, as she struggled with a Bradshaw, she was planning to take an air-cushion, some of the best brandy, and a few little favourite medicaments, with her to-morrow. Couldn't her family understand that the living should unite always to defy and ignore Death till his hand was outstretched inexorably? Never, for the oldest and most infirm and most suitably removed, could she pass so easy a sentence as her companions had bestowed already on the poor stricken old lady. 'They *are* inhuman,' thought Mrs. Carey rebelliously when a ring at the bell put an end to the point at issue.

'She's gone,' said Montague, opening the telegram, and speedily Mrs. Carey disappeared with the excuse of packing. They could be as inhuman as they liked now, and alone she could weep a little and pray a little for the silent, shrivelled, little figure, far away on a white bed beneath the shadow of the hills. That grey, distant shadow seemed very distant from the bright, self-confident Harlequins in the drawing-room below.

II.

The sun had set but the moon had risen, full and white in the paling sky. The syringa blossoms, from the bush by the green wicket-gate, scattered the path with delicate, mourning petals, but the white climbing rose over the porch was in flower, scenting the air with its honied blossoms. The heavy summer foliage of the elms rose, dark and forbidding, from the stream in the valley below the house, but above them the delicate outline of the hills stood peaceful and secure. If there was solemnity in the air there was serenity, and Mrs. Carey's pathetic memories of the little, lady-like ghosts who haunted the cottage mingled with a gentle pleasure in her inheritance, as she sat in the porch of Basswaite Cottage, tired out with preparations for the arrival of her family next day.

It was almost impossible to believe that only ten days had passed since that hot afternoon when the telegram arrived. So naturally had she entered into her new and infinitesimal kingdom that her everyday life seemed strangely remote and unnatural. An odd memory of some thirty years ago haunted her indeed persistently, as she had laid out sheets and towels for her family's use. Very shy and nervous, at the age of eighteen, she had awaited the arrival of a wholly unsuitable and unknown admirer to a formal dinner with her own critical family. Was it the scent of the white roses above

her, the paraffin lamp in the hall and the hay in the fields above, which recalled that evening? Or was it simply that her emotions were the same? Just as she had been torn then by fears that her Bertie would despise her relations, and her relations despise Bertie, so now divided loyalties tugged at her heart. She was trying to see Basswaite with her children's eyes, and forestalling possible criticism. That was natural enough, but another odd sensation, born of ten days' beautiful solitude and peace in her new home, obsessed her as well. It was absurd, but she wondered very much how Basswaite, how she, at least as its owner, representative and lover, was going to approve of the family in its new setting.

They could not criticise the setting, indeed, unless some far-away storm in the Atlantic were sweeping eastwards to obscure her valley. As in an Italian picture the hills rose as guardians about her, and beneath the cottage a river ran through meadows starred with flowers. Only, to her eyes, the stunted oaks and wild thickets of elder and birch, and the prim white cottages dotted on the hillside, in the thin and shining air of the North, brought a sense of joy and freedom which the South could never give. Monty would not like the garden of course. Very trim was the bedding-out of geraniums and snapdragons in the uneven turf in front of the house. Even the walled kitchen garden behind was too utilitarian for him, and the long, narrow strip of shrubbery, terminating in a dark arbour, would horrify him. Well, he might mock at and alter the garden if he pleased but she would try to keep reforming hands off the house!

They might not want to alter it, she reflected, as she rose restlessly, and surveyed the rooms on each side of the porch once more. But they would sprinkle humorous epithets over the prim little drawing-room. Aunt Camilla had moved with her times, and instead of the Chippendale, Jane-Austen dignity Monty had predicted, was a perfect Victorian gem. There was a buhl book-case and china cupboard, uncomfortable little chairs and a straight sofa covered with patterned damask: Aunt Adela's water-colours in close array surrounded a sketch of Aunt Camilla by Opie, which was the only valuable thing in the room, and a pastel drawing of Aunt Adela which had, for all these days, been making way in Mrs. Carey's sentimental affections. The black round table with its albums and gift books, the long bead footstool and fire-screen, the lustres on the mantelpiece, all seemed sentinels to rebuff invaders and critics. Nor did the dining-room give a slighter impression of

reserve. Steel engravings of Raphael's Miracles hung above book-cases of faded, gilded little volumes: there were busts, a bronze clock, and an inkstand situated in an emu's egg on the writing-table. The bedrooms upstairs were, apart from their views, no less prosaic and severe, and yet Mrs. Carey loved them all. 'And if they want to change them,' she told herself, 'I shall just go and live with Mary in the kitchen!'

The wide low kitchen, with its open windows and low fire, was indeed one of the jewels of the house, and Mary, who stood at the table, giving a last polish to the beautiful Queen Anne silver, was not the least delightful part of it to Mrs. Carey. For here again, after so many years, she found herself in possession of that legacy of Victorian days, a maid who bent, with sleeves rolled up, over washing pails in the morning, and by afternoon was transformed into a pattern of efficiency and neatness in starched cap and apron. And, after a day or two, she had found in Mary much more; she had found respectful friendliness, and a repository of that past, which, in the cottage, seemed to her so much more arresting and significant than her own humdrum London life.

'You're not working still, Mary!'

'Only just a look-over, ma'm, as we'll be busy to-morrow.'

'I think I've got all the drawers tidy and empty,' said Mrs. Carey anxiously. She was glad indeed to have finished her task of storing, despatching to cousins, or destroying, the hoarded trinkets, laces and shawls, photos and notes, faded sketches, pressed flowers and treasured locks of hair, all the infinitely pathetic, exquisitely kept jetsam of little Aunt Adela's life.

'There's only the attic left, ma'am. You'll have to go through the papers one of these days.'

There was a moment's silence. Before both women's eyes was a picture of the low attic under the roof, scented with the ghosts of dried apples and lavender, empty save for a little pile of trunks and those two boxes of old papers beside a tiny fireplace. So graphically had Mary told the story of how Miss Adela had, on the day before her death, mounted the attic steps 'and for two years her heart had been too bad to think of such a thing'—and bidden Mary lay the fire so that she could destroy every memento of her past. 'Those were my Aunt's orders,' she said to me, 'and I can put it off no longer, Mary.' But that last hecatomb was planned too late, for by the boxes Mary found the little lady lying, an hour later, stricken by the approach of death.

'I must look through them and burn them,' murmured Mrs. Carey. 'I wonder she left it to the very last.'

'She set great store by them, ma'am,' said Mary earnestly. 'She just worshipped Miss Camilla you know. I mind when I first came here the old lady made me think of one of those idols, all wrapped up and set in state as it were—though when she spoke or laughed she was human enough. And there might be Miss Adela's own memories up there too, letters and such like. For all the village knew that the Rector, that was the Reverend Giles who was before Mr. Orr, who was before this gentleman, was very set upon her. She'd never have him, and I've an idea, I don't know why, that it was Miss Camilla set her against marriage. But every week he wrote to her, I know, and those letters she'd keep and read up there, for she told me so herself. "Of course I must destroy them if he marries," she'd say. But in the end he died faithful to her, and she said to me without a tear—"At least I can keep these for ever now."

'She must have been very lonely sometimes,' said Mrs. Carey.

'I don't think so, ma'am, she was always so busy. She'd help me with the house every morning, for she was one of those ladies who loved to care for every little thing, and help to keep everything just so. I often think there'd be more good maid-servants, ma'am, if there were more mistresses like that. And then she'd be out with her rain-gauge and with her hens and her garden. She was fair set on that till her rheumatism grew so cruel two years ago—she'd often translate that text-like thing Miss Camilla put up in the hall, ma'am—'

'Il faut cultiver notre jardin,' said Mrs. Carey, absently—

'Yes, that's it, ma'am, only after old Hobbs worked up here instead of her she seemed to lose interest, for he was so deaf and set in his own ways. And then she'd cook—such cakes for village weddings and parties—they'd ask none but her to teach them when they started the Women's Institute here—and broth and jellies for every sick person in the village, or right away up in the hills. And in the evening she'd read to me while I worked after tea was put away—and there were few days that a friend didn't come and share it. And she did all that lovely work you see in the linen-cupboard, ma'am, and never without a stocking for some poor child or another on her needles. No indeed, ma'am, she was always busy, and I think she made a very happy job of her life, one way and another.'

Mrs. Carey was slow in going to sleep that night. All over the house were other framed texts and maxims besides that of Voltaire in the hall. 'Greater is he,' read Mrs. Carey as she washed herself, 'that conquereth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' That was the warfare in which Aunt Adela had successfully engaged. She had put to rout disappointment, anguish, loneliness and monotony, by the expedient of simple daily duties, and wrested the citadel of content from the opposing forces. To her children's generation conquest was a familiar word, but their aims were to conquer Nature, to beat records, to conquer opponents in every game of skill. Self-conquest was to them not only an old-fashioned but a reprehensible ideal. That was why, reflected Mrs. Carey, though she knew quite accurately how Aunt Adela would behave in any crisis or decide in any moral dilemma, she could not have the same confidence in her family or the husband who always seemed, oddly enough, to be on their level rather than her own. There would be a test for them to-morrow when they discovered how illusory were their hopes of a fortune in Aunt Camilla's legacy. They would stand, in her eyes, the searching test of comparison with the shadowy ghost of the gentle, serene little lady, who seemed so real to her in this, her quiet old-fashioned shrine. 'A happy job of her life—' What better epitaph could anyone need? Upon how very few of her children's set, or her own acquaintances, could it be inscribed daily! There was Billy of course. At eight years old Billy was still her own, and free, apparently, from the literary taint which had made her other children demand pencils and paper where Billy asked for sixpenny motors and torpedoes. She would tell Billy all about Aunt Adela, and try to explain to him the secret of such lives. He, at least, would know perfect happiness in exploring the house and garden!

Lunch next day was not a happy job, realised Mrs. Carey ruefully. Aunt Adela seemed to take wings and disappear for ever, as, after a series of telegrams and mismanaged plans, her family arrived at Basswaite. A large family always looks its most commonplace when established at a midday meal. At home they drifted elusively in and out, to a side-board of electric heaters and cold dishes, but Mary was not content till she saw them all set round the white tablecloth, with Monty busy at the chickens. The family conversation was at a low level, resolving itself into descriptions of the horrors of packing for themselves, for the first time; the vileness of the hotel at Penrith where they had stayed overnight; and their

failure to find the hill track by which they had purposed to descend upon the last home of the Careys. The little house seemed to shrink at once into a background for their vivid, challenging personalities, and it earned from them no recognition save pettish complaints for its want of modern conveniences.

'It has an atmosphere of course!' Monty was first to make even this admission when evening came. The family were restored to cheerfulness by then, for Montague had found a rare Montaigne, the twins had scandalised the village by walking in beach suits to bathe in the pool below the bridge, and Billy had explored house and fruit bushes, and won Mary's heart for ever. 'But how tragic to think of the things she must have parted with when she evolved this horrid little sitting-room. Of course we can alter it completely. We must throw the hall into this room, and build a living-room on the other side, and terrace the garden—'

'We shall have to be very careful to keep it going at all,' said Mrs. Carey firmly, worn out and nettled by the anti-climax of the day.

'But surely!'—Everyone looked up from the lamp at that remark. 'Surely you inherit the money as well?'

'What there is, but it was never as much as we thought, and some of it was sunk in an annuity. When the duties are taken off there won't be more than a hundred and fifty a year.'

'Only enough to keep it going at all,' growled Montague. 'We might have known that such longevity was due to an annuity.'

'Then our ship hasn't come home,' said Vivian, 'only a horrid little canoe!'

'Of course we can make it a little by letting it now and then,' suggested Merlin. 'Americans would be foolish enough to pay well.'

'And then I could go to Paris for a year!' Vivian's little face, with its aristocratic features and vulgar make-up, brightened a little. Always she grudged that gap in her education.

'What about Oxford for me?' Merlin balanced himself against the steel fender, his tall slender figure and absurd shock of hair stretching up to the dusky roof.

'And you all say Billy should go away to school,' said Mrs. Carey lightheartedly. She had never wanted an income which would make her family insist on this sacrifice—'No, my dears, we can't do all that!'

'Unless we sell it,' suggested Merlin.

'Merlin dear, do move, you're in my light,' said Mrs. Carey.

The tall figure was blotting out a sketch above the mantelpiece, and she needed Aunt Camilla's brilliant determined eyes, and the vigour which the artist had managed to express even in ringlets and draping shawl, to support her now.

'Oh, should we sell it?' said Montague stretching his chair back from the table and rubbing his eyeglasses. 'After all, it's the last bit of the Carey property, and a curious and delightful heirloom. Don't let us sacrifice everything to this absurd passion for money.' It was indeed true, considered Mrs. Carey, that her husband had no abstract desire for money: he merely spent it whether or no he happened to have any.

'One or two Americans made offers even before Aunt Adela died,' said Mrs. Carey in a tone of decision which surprised her family. 'But I am not going to sell it.'

With that effect of an unalterable resolution she left them, to help Mary in the pantry. She was surprised to find her hands shaking, as she dried silver and glass, and she was, of course, assailed by shame at the selfishness of her decision. She might reason with herself that Oxford would ruin Merlin, and Paris Vivian, that Billy was better at home, and that it was better to preserve this refuge against want and old age than to let Montague joyfully squander her capital. At the bottom of her heart she knew it was her love for the little home, her strange close affection for Aunt Adela, her infinite sense of home and rest amongst the hills of her forefathers, which weighed most selfishly and helplessly with her. That her children might share her love, and feel the inalienable charm, till they too would refuse to think of parting with Basswaite, was her best hope for the future.

And then, next day, the rain began.

Enough has been said and sung about rain in the hills. Mountains and lochs, tarns and glens have heard often enough the agonised denunciations of their lovers, their threats of renunciation. Well, they know that the first gleam of sunshine on the incense of bog-myrtle, and on the spate in brown peat-streams, will bring those lovers back repentant to their feet. But not as yet were the Careys lovers, and for ten days not one repentant gleam shone through the pall of mist and the relentless rains. It is true that, as Mrs. Carey had often allowed, the great compensation for a literary family was its behaviour in wet weather. Their grumbling was varied by interminable discussions, and plans for a new biography of Aunt Camilla. When they were tired of tapping the barometer they took out their

stylo pens, and after one wet walk a day they settled down to sheaves of scribbling paper by the fire. It was a relief to Mrs. Carey that their mordant humour seldom played about Aunt Adela, who looked down on the figures, which tried so unavailingly to sprawl in the neat compact little chairs, with her alert air of hardly-won content and serenity. Aunt Camilla was their hope, and they approached her in their varying ways. Montague saw her as Hecuba, mourning from her desolate refuge here the brilliant company which had sung about her rose-crowned youth in the Troy Town of the Lakes. Merlin considered that Proust alone could represent her aristocratic isolation, and wrapt her probable sex complexes in a decent cloak of impenetrable sentences. Vivian declared that only the child of Jane Austen and James Joyce could reproduce that limited, illimitable spirit, and set herself to emulate the style of this strange literary portent. Only Billy left Aunt Camilla alone, and ate unripe gooseberries conscientiously in the rain.

Mrs. Carey made no protest. Too often had she seen the same ephemeral spate of literary productions, dissolving at the close of the holidays into foam and air. Every lodging or house they entered for a week was full of papers, containing scraps of dialogue, the first acts of plays, lines of immortal verse and shreds of essays. Very rarely did the brilliant efforts of her family reach any conclusion, still more rarely did they materialise in print. She had herself put aside all thoughts of Aunt Adela, in the urgent problems of house-keeping, and helping Mary in the severe strain of work imposed by her untidy and critical family. Sometimes the thought of the papers in the apple-attic obsessed her, but only when the sun shone, and her family scattered for the day on the hills, could she approach that shrine, and pry into Aunt Adela's delicate secrets. Afterwards she reproached herself bitterly that she had felt secure when she locked the room and entrusted the key to Mary. She should have remembered Billy's passion for exploring, and Mary's still more hopeless infatuation for Billy.

So it was that she was quite unprepared for the blow which fell upon her, for the crisis which was to live always in her memory with that bruised painfulness which nothing but a conflict of loyalties can give.

Alone she had walked over the hills, a week after her family's arrival, in search of that pair of chickens which prove always so elusive in country-places. She had trudged back, enjoying even the squelching grass and slippery stepping-stones, in anticipation

of that sense of home-coming the cottage never failed to give, when, even as she looked up at the little white house, she realised that something was afoot. Vivian waved from a window, Montague stood at the door looking out for her, and Merlin came splashing under the syringa bush down the path, his fair thin face lit with excitement.

‘Come in quickly! Such a discovery!’

Mrs. Carey’s heart was sinking even before she entered the sitting-room, and saw the snow of papers on tables and chairs. There was no need for Billy to wave the key of the attic, in the proud consciousness of having made a real discovery, however incomprehensible it was to his intelligence, for the first time in his life. His mother stared with a sense of coming doom from her family to Aunt Adela’s delicate, smiling little portrait.

‘Her diary! My dear Mums! Aunt Camilla’s own diary!’

‘It’s too thrilling! Shocking disclosures! (Billy, run away and eat gooseberries!) Scandal in High Life!’

‘Camilla my dear!’ Even Montague was excited. ‘We shall have the ear of the public at last!’

‘Mum, this is the death-knell of the Victorian tradition! They’re discovered at last! They were no better than we are!’

‘But what is it?’ asked Mrs. Carey, stunned.

‘Well, my love!’ Montague hushed the others to silence. ‘Billy in the course of his investigations, found upstairs a box of papers which, according to Mary, were the favourite literature of Adela. And no wonder! There were quantities of letters, some of priceless value from her father’s friends, one from Coleridge, three from Wordsworth, several of course from Southey. And, beneath them, this!’—holding up a little faded, gilt-bound album. ‘Here, in Camilla’s own writing, is the story of her life! And as to that story! Well, my dear, we all know from contemporary history and biography how long and hopelessly she loved, and was loved by, the least important but most attractive of the late constellation. We’ve all been called on to admire the self-control, the Diana-like virginity, the Victorian virtue, with which she allowed her admirer’s previous unhappy marriage to ruin her life and hopes. Now we know the truth in her own confession. We might have known it before. Once she admits her relationship to Adela, that portrait cries the truth aloud!’

Mrs. Carey sat down suddenly, with something of the sick feeling of one who comes unexpectedly on a group of children torturing an animal. She made no protest as her family stood

rejoicing over the book which revealed Great-aunt Camilla as the mother of Aunt Adela. What was there to say? Ever since she had seen, on her arrival, Aunt Adela's delicate little features sharpened by death into a clear cameo of her own and her family's outlines, she had been conscious of queer, suppressed wonders over the past of the little cottage. They were telling her only what she knew, indeed, already. She was obsessed only by an absurd longing to escape with her emotions, but before her was a task of such magnitude that she must set to it at once, ill-prepared as she was.

'It's very strange, it's extraordinary,' she began, 'but of course—'

'My dear, it's more! It's a gold mine,' cried Vivian. 'Dads is writing off at once to see what offer Elphinstone and Coke will give for the diary, edited by himself of course. It'll run to hundreds or even thousands in circulation, for just think of the American rights! And then the MS. itself will fetch almost anything at Sotheby's! Imagine! Our ship's in sail at last!'

'But,' said Mrs. Carey, with a slow insistence which contrasted strangely with the high, quick chatter of her family. 'You surely don't dream of publishing it?'

'My dear Mums!' Only an incredulous laugh met the quiet words. 'You don't realise! This is a buried treasure! It's a fortune!'

'Nonsense, child!' Montague spoke as peevishly as the extravagant tend to do, when the base subject of money is introduced. 'My dear Camilla, this is a literary discovery of the first importance. It's a contribution, not only to Camilla Carey's history but to that of her century. It's the truth—and truth will out. We may be glad her secret was kept during all those years, when the strait-laced would have condemned her, but this age will only glorify her the more as a very human woman.'

'But you're overlooking something!' Mrs. Carey held up the book and pointed to the clear, spidery writing on the fly-leaf. '"To be burnt unread after Adela's death." There are her orders.'

The rain had fallen heavily on Mrs. Carey's figure on the hills to-day, but it was light and meaningless compared with the torrent of protest and argument in which she struggled now. Upon her fell a stream of horrified invective. What was her attitude due to but prudishness, family snobbery, hypocrisy, fear of the truth, or, at best, sentimental madness?

'But she wished it to be destroyed,' persisted Mrs. Carey, unmoved, when she found a pause. 'You don't understand the

story. She left it to Adela as a warning, or as a compensation. The mother and daughter agreed that to keep their secret Aunt Adela must never marry. If she'd married her husband must have known, and so Adela's life was sacrificed to protect Camilla's memory. Adela was going to burn it when she felt her task was done. She was found, dying, before the box in the attic and the grate was all ready for its destruction. You can't disobey a last command like this.'

Again a storm of protests bespattered Mrs. Carey, and again she shook them off unheeding.

'No, it's not that I'm a Philistine, or morbid, or an enemy of the truth. It's simply that we owe a debt to the mother and daughter. They've left us this place—'

'Which we don't want!' said Vivian and Merlin in bitter chorus.

'—And their money, which you certainly want. It's as impossible to betray their secrets as those of any benefactor, any relation, any hostess. It's—it's simply wrong, or, as you'd say, it's not done!'

Again the torrent fell. 'Mums, how *can* it hurt them now? . . . Do you really believe they're watching us from a parlour in Heaven in mittens and cameo brooches? . . . Be reasonable, Camilla! Death is the great disinfectant of history! . . . My dear Mums, would you guard the secrets of Cleopatra and Queen Anne? One person isn't more dead than another!'

'We couldn't,' concluded Montague generously, 'have published in Adela's lifetime, but now!'

'I'll go and change,' said Mrs. Carey, with shivering limbs and chattering teeth.

'Yes, and change your mind too,' said Merlin viciously. 'It's about as draggled and depressing as your waterproof.'

'No, I shan't change that,' said Mrs. Carey, ignoring his rudeness, in the full weight of her decision. 'That's made up already.'

Mrs. Carey saw little of her family for the rest of the day. She shut herself up alone with the diary, ignoring the fact that the twins were busy with fanciful prologues and prolific notes. That problem was forgotten before the pathetic story which unrolled itself before her eyes. Yet, even as her heart bled for the brilliant, vital woman who had yielded to the urge of life, and sacrificed the rest of it to unavailing repentance, and for the daughter who had so meekly and sweetly accepted the sacrifice of her own life as atonement for her mother's name, and wrested for herself happiness out of solitude and disappointed hope, she was conscious of a larger issue. Never till now had she realised that her self-sacrificing submission to

Montague, and her acquiescence in letting his personality dominate the characters of her children, might be a colossal mistake. With the wonderful capacity for recuperation in Nature she was already trying to realise their point of view. To literary people all the world was a field for exploration: to them Aunt Camilla and Aunt Adela were names, not living personalities; gratitude and family loyalty were not the virtues of their generation. But it was all of no account. The single fact stared her in the face, that, as she had first premised on that stifling afternoon in London, to be remote from life was to destroy life, to despise ordinary people and ordinary obvious morality was to earn contempt in a crisis, to mock at the idea of self-conquest was to find in self a merciless, unheeding tyrant.

This story has been told so far only from Mrs. Carey's point of view. Let it be admitted, at once, that hers was only one angle of vision, and that her husband and children, as they sat up into the small hours over the dying fire, had, perhaps, a justifiable attitude to the problem. Every generation has its own moments of surprise and difficulty in readjusting the common morality of the past, or the morality of the individual, to a changing social conscience. From Montague's point of view he was probably right in attributing his wife's unexpected decision to Victorian reticence, family snobbery, old-world respect for human morality, and Philistine indifference to the best interests of history. Merlin and Vivian took their stand on the higher ground of Absolute Truth. Truth, they declaimed, was absolute; it must always be wrong to colour or suppress it. To the evasions and concealment of the past were due all the social evils of the world. To preserve the confidence of an old lady who had closed her eyes on life fifty years ago was acting a lie: their mother, by ranging herself on the side of her ancestors, was denying progress, and using her moral weight to thrust the world back into the confused tangle of hypocrisy and prudery which to their minds represented the forgotten age. When their mother was driven to retort that in her opinion, the nineteenth century was an age of great deeds done by great men, and the twentieth of little records broken by little men, the twins met her with contempt. Like all the youth of the world they were convinced that bliss was it in their dawn to be alive, although, indeed, the dawn was not a time with which they had any intimate acquaintance.

So the discussion raged for three days, during which Mrs. Carey aged visibly. Often, in her supreme weariness, she saw again the close little glass tank, with its theatrical illumination and garish

plants, where those rainbow coloured fish disported themselves in an unreal world. There was a real world outside, she told herself steadily, where the essential virtues like honour, truth and loyalty reigned supreme. It was the Harlequins whose vision was limited and distorted: it was not her own. And yet, as countless arguments punctuated every darkened day and dripping night, the right of herself as mother to sacrifice the prosperity of her family to a moral decision which they could see only as a senseless whim, obscured any possibility of action or determination. It was only when she made one final appeal to the family, assembled in the sitting-room, that light shone suddenly in the darkness.

'But can't you see?' she said pitifully, while yet once more she vetoed the posting of that letter to Montague's publishers which would settle the question, and win the family fame and fortune. 'Can't you see that mere gratitude forbids it?'

'Gratitude for what?' asked Vivian bitterly. 'For a damp hovel we all hate? For a Victorian museum in a perpetual shower-bath? For a spot of land in a teacup of mountains with not a neighbour worth speaking to and nothing to do?'

Mrs. Carey looked at her son steadily and turned to her husband.

'You feel like that, Montague—and you too, Vivian?'

In a moment her Harlequins were alive and many-coloured. From the animated face of her daughter and her voluble epithets, Mrs. Carey glanced, as usual, to Aunt Adela's gentle, silent portrait.

'I like the sea better,' said Billy unexpectedly. To-day, at last, he had been reduced to a book in the sitting-room. 'I'm sick of getting wet—and rather sick of gooseberries.'

Mrs. Carey turned and went upstairs to her room. Quickly she began to put on her boots. She must not pause, or she would be incapable of the greatest and most inevitable sacrifice of her life. Quite clearly she saw her duty in perspective at last. Fame she could not give her family by illicit means, by the stepping-stones of a violated confidence. Wealth, or at least some accession of comfort, she could give them, by robbing herself of what she had come to hold most dear on earth. 'And after all,' she told herself with quivering lips, 'I've only had this cottage for three weeks. That doesn't count for much in life, and I shall always have it to remember and to love. It will always belong to the Aunts now, and to me through them. Greater is he that selleth a cottage than he that gives way to his Harlequins. Oh dear! I mustn't think in that muddled way! I must be business-like.'

With trembling fingers she extracted from a drawer a letter which she had received just after her arrival at the cottage. Had she been tampering with the truth by keeping it to herself, or had she been genuine in her belief that to keep the cottage was of more material use to her family than any acquisition of capital? Well, it was of no use to worry now. Somehow or other she must square her accounts between her conscience and theirs, and hope and pray afterwards for the best. With bent head and smarting eyes she made her way to the telephone in the village post office.

Yes, Mr. Hiram B. Wells was still at Penrith. . . . Yes, he had been asking only yesterday if there were any hope of acquiring Basswaite Cottage after all—('Never, thought poor Mrs. Carey, had she come across so efficient a telephone service, so capable a land-agent!') Yes, he had made the astounding offer of six thousand pounds for the cottage and its two acres of land. . . . The agent could assure Mrs. Carey that the nation could never conceivably advance such a price, and that no other offer for the cottage had reached half that sum. . . . If Mrs. Carey could wait in the Call Office, he would ring up Mr. Wells and enter into negotiations at once. Americans were of course notoriously rapid in business operations, and in this case the credentials of Mr. Wells were secure beyond all question. . . . Very well, then, if Mrs. Carey would wait . . .'

Half an hour later Mrs. Carey walked home, her eyes alight, her cheeks flushed with the glow of an accomplished sacrifice. But her task was not over yet.

It was fortunate, she reflected, that only the day before she had restored the box of papers to the apple attic, in spite of the protests of the twins. Slowly and steadily she climbed the worn uneven stair and shut herself into the room. For a moment she let the strange sharp fragrance of the room surround her, for a moment she gazed out of the low window at the hills. For a moment she seemed to see kneeling by the fire a piteous, imploring little ghost. Then she knelt down by the fireplace and lit the fire.

'Camilla, what is this? What is this?'

The smell of burning papers from the attic roused Billy first, and, as he shouted his discovery, Montague and the twins came rushing upstairs, like hounds exasperated by a high scent. Alone in the attic, wreathed in smoke from the unused chimney, stood Mrs. Carey, frail, pale and determined. It is to Montague's credit that he saw momentarily in his wife a vision of long vanished, fairer ladies, of greater traditions and more tragic sacrifices.

'Mother! You can't have!' Merlin strode furiously to the embers.

'Mother, it's theft, yes, theft from us,' said Vivian with burning eyes.

'Listen, my dears!' Mrs. Carey's moment had come, and with it the fearlessness and serenity of self-conquest. 'I've listened to you all, and I've tried to accommodate my views to yours, but I can't. This secret is my affair, and mine alone, and it is to die with me. That's what I think is my plain duty, and I wish I were clever enough to make you understand. I can't get into your little fantastic, shining world, Montague, and you can't get out into the real world where love and loyalty matter. But because you can't share my point of view I've done my best to make up. I've sold the cottage—yes, I sold it this morning to an American, who'd made an offer for it. I'll make over the money—and it's six thousand pounds—to all of you and to John. The other yearly income I'll keep for Billy and for Mary when she's too old to work.'

'But the diary—our biography—our names!' gasped Montague, still plucking at the burnt fragments in the fireplace.

'That's to be suppressed and forgotten—that's part of the bargain. There are letters and material enough for a new life of Aunt Camilla—and those I've saved. But the rest—well, they're burnt. You may say it's a sacrifice to my family pride or sense of honour, or an offering to the conventions, or loyalty to the dead. I really don't care, for I know myself I've only done what I thought was right.'

Her voice wavered a little, but that was all. Leaving her family to the embers she went downstairs and stood alone, blinded now by tears, in the little room whose arms of kindliness and understanding had enfolded her once, and must be loosened for ever. Before the portraits of Aunt Camilla and Aunt Adela she stood with trembling lips as she wiped away her tears.

'You were never silly like this!' she murmured. 'But then you were sure of yourselves. You lived in a clear, cold, certain world: you didn't see difficult decisions shifting and darting past you like a breaking rainbow! Oh I wish, how I wish, that you could come back from the grave and tell me if I was right or wrong!'

But, naturally, no answer came from either of the pictured, questioning old ladies. After all, could they, or could anyone else, declare quite definitely whether or no Mrs. Carey had done the right thing?

BETWEEN SEA AND SKY.

BY MARGARET ASHWORTH.

I.

If you would seek these acres of song and light you must first seek the coast that leans toward The Wash and throws out wide salt marshes to meet the sea. The little towns facing the marshes have no well-known names; their bustling days are over; you will not easily find Blakeney, Cley, Morston on the map. At times there is a desolateness on the shore that might frighten the sight-seer and make him hurry away to promenades and bands, a loneliness such as to make a cheering sight of a petrol-pump on a tar-mac road.

Wherever you go on the salt marshes light beats in on your senses, and the unwavering note of the sea drums softly on your ear from some three miles' distance as yonder gulls might fly. These two presences can make, on a chosen morning, a new heaven and a new earth of this disconsolate place. Then the shabby quay-way and the idle boats cease to complain that they have seen better days. You can forget them. Only sky and sea exist, webbed together by winding strips of land. Overhead the clouds wander where the wind bids them, silver-bright and bewildering, catching the downward radiance of the sky and the upward radiance of the shore. Wind or no wind, you hear the note of the sea beyond the Point; not on the calmest day is that voice stilled. And if you should then wonder that with never a breath to fan a leaf the sea should still lift up a hollow voice, the marsh-worker will tell you the reason. He knows: it is the sea calling to the wind to come back.

The salt marshes are pale grey-green, dun, lavender, gold. The sea plays with them, slips in and out of the creeks, fills them with wisps and pools of light that ripple and break and are still again. You might even contrive to forget the sea, so like an inland heath the marshes may become. You can skim their edges, go wandering for miles on the tiny, faithful paths, watching the delicately wound lines of ridge and hummock, trying to steal the colour and put it

away in your memory for ever ; you turn round and lo ! the tide has been coming up behind you, erasing all lines, all restlessness, making of the sea-ward flats a silver sheet of peace and leaving you the landward for your feet. The moon gives enchantment, turning the saltings into a garden set with paths and mazes. But the big tides of the year rise and fall on the marshes and sheet them with froth and spume from the Point to the dyke that guards the tillage, and leave their dead and their spoil on the dyke.

Not long after one of these tides I found in the course of a short walk that I must number sorrowfully among the slain three gulls, a razor-bill, a whimbrel, a curlew and a score of smaller birds. It seems at these times that the salt marshes, which for the most part defy the human foot and aspire to an independent state, are reminded that by an unyielding tenure they are held by the sea.

You might think they belonged to the land, counting their flowers. Walking along the dingy morasses at low tide I saw thyme, sea-lavender, stonecrop, sea-thrift, and other growths nameless for me. One patch of sea-thrift just on the water-line was hurrying into flower—a rare rose-red. I looked at the buds in wonder. The little plant had endured the drenching and dragging of the tide and still was there. You cannot walk on the marshes without thinking of the mystery of their drowned life. Since yesterday the sea has come up twice and flooded these cranies and rimmed these tiny flowers and grasses ; over this sea-garden a caressing water has passed as night with her coolness and dew passes over an inland garden. Then the flood goes down, the sun shines and the wind blows on the sea-garden ; tangled grass unmats itself, flowers are flowers again and not drowned weeds.

It is only after you have got used to the dominance of sky and sea that you hear other sounds in the saltings and become aware of other shapes. The sounds might be a web, part of the air, and at the mercy of the shifting winds, so bodyless they seem. Birds beyond number haunt the marshes, making an outpost of the colony on the Point. You can stand and stare for hours, if you will. The birds know they are safe out there and can afford to be indifferent to the human presence. Of dogs they live in constant fear. My own, a happy vagrant, borrowed for the hour, could never resist the joy of setting those timorous wings in flight.

Larks sing so constantly here that unless they form relieving squadrons I cannot think how they find time to eat, much less to seek their food. Scores of pipits, ready to add their note to the

chorus, whirl about in the upper air as you pass and drop suddenly, like stones, on to some tussock. Curlew rise wailing, change in mid-air to a flute-like note and a gurgle, slide down to a lavender clump and watch you out of sight. Whimbrel and ringed plover are rarely silent. Now and again sheld-duck from the Point fly over the marshes and add their strange note to the tangle of sound. On the far, shelving bank of the channel where the tide scours out its deepest passage, a pair of oyster-catchers are working ceaselessly, delving in the mud, black spots on the shining, oozing slope. Those specks you can pick out with a glass are dunlin marching up and down.

Your eyes wander over the waste of cranny and ridge to the sea, seek the sky and come back again, discovering more tokens of life in the waste. Here and there in the creeks are bent shafts—poles set to guide the sailor and keep him in mid-channel at flood of tide. On the near channel edge, where boats are moored sometimes at the ebb, two or three men are gathering shell-fish. They rarely stand upright, stay long in one place, look for the most part like large stones; you are not surprised when they disappear, and have no notion what creek has swallowed them up.

If you want to know how strong is the spell of the salt marshes and how closely they hold eye and ear with their light-bleached colour and the remoteness of their sounds, you can find it on coming back along the dyke to the town. You turn a corner—the dyke ends suddenly by the walls of some outbuildings, and there before you is a garden behind a stout little sea-wall. It is a garden trim and kept, smelling of sweet things, with rich brown loam and green grass, and a saucy blackbird pecking the soil and deriding the coming rain. High walls to the east keep off the arid wind; trees built to leeward of the house hem the place in and give it peace. This garden thus suddenly met at the gate of the grey marshes sets them leagues away, and can give you an odd feeling that it is a real presence, with more than hands and a voice.

II.

It was on a wild April morning, cold and stinging, that I first went across the Point. An ill day, but there are not so many for choosing in an ordinary person's calendar that the chance of going to a wild-bird sanctuary may be flouted. The Point, in sight of the sea marshes and the dim lines of three church towers, is a stretch

of shingle and sand-dunes, banks of shrub and grass, making perhaps a mile one way and less another ; there is a remoter headland beloved by the visiting tern. For those who prefer to reach it by that penitential way, a shingle spit some four miles long connects the Point with Cley.

The Watcher took me in his little boat down the winding creek from Morston into the main channel that divides the Point from the marshes, looking anxiously over his shoulder as he rowed, wondering if the Pit would defeat him. There the deepest soundings of the channel are, and we were tossed a-plenty before the Pit and the tide let us be. I was cowardly enough to be scared and had begun to consider my hat as a baling weapon when I felt the gentler water under us. After another ten minutes the boat's nose ground on a little spit of beach.

Chilled and stiff, I wrapped my cloak about me and spent the first half-hour trying to get out of the wind and finding I must stop and watch, wind or no wind. From the shelter of grass, shrub and hillock came the wings of big and little birds breaking the solitude of the place, making it light and airy, as if the foam on the seaward slope had flung itself higher and taken shape.

Dunlins were parading on the wet sand, restless for flight to their breeding-grounds in the north. The whistle of oyster-catchers came through chinks in the gale. There was a beat of wings, and two by two a dropping of sheld-duck arose, swept about me and were gone over the shoulder of the Point. For some time I stayed watching under cover to see again those gallant bodies lying on the wind, heads eagerly out. An 'exaltation' of skylarks, who will always sing you wet through, as the Watcher says, were warbling against the storm in an upper air and gave me a sudden illusion of sunshine. I looked about. There was a ridge of light on the spit of the far point, and for the rest, dun skies. As if to test the valour of the larks, the first drops of rain began to fall.

Presently the Watcher joined me, and we went round the little grassy sand-hills to some pebble ridges licked by the waves and only swept now and again by the big tides. He was walking with his eyes on his feet, and I learned that first lesson, always to stand still on a breeding-ground when you are watching birds in the air. For a spell we played a delightful game of 'I spy!' with eggs of the ringed plover in the shingle.

'Would you say now,' quoth the Watcher, 'there were any eggs here?' 'Indeed not!' and I would step cautiously on. 'You're

getting warmer.' And still my stupid eyes would only see millions of little sea pebbles about the size of plovers' eggs. Then suddenly 'I spy!' and there, in a shell-lined scoop a few inches from my feet were three eggs. We found scores of them. The plovers made me forget the wind scraping the dunes, the chilly rain. Each nest, I saw, was marked in some secret way by the Watcher. If one egg disappears, he will know. A heedless person, tramping on the shingle, could kill a hundred lives in a few minutes' walk. From their other enemies—rooks, owls, carrion crows from the mainland, drifting sand, a jealous-fingered tide—they are defended, like the rest of the colony, with all the skill and patience a human being may show.

The Watcher had some special calls to make, to see if the oyster-catchers were laying on their favoured ridges. Two days ago he had noticed the beginning of a scrape. There was nothing in it, and it was not the scrape he sought. He now stopped triumphantly at a spot in the shingle as like as any other, one might have thought. 'There! that's the twenty-ninth year that oyster-catcher has nested here.'

I looked curiously at the clumsy dimple in the pebbles, all the off-hand oyster-catchers desire by way of a couch. Like most of us, they will never learn by experience and year by year confidently set up house on the very edge of the tide-mark. Watcher was looking for the male bird among the flying wings overhead, giving his call. They are old friends, these two, and have had many a 'heart-to-heart talk' about the state of the weather and food supplies. This bird comes every day to sit on the rail of the boat-house where the guardian of the colony lives in the breeding season, and derides him for thinking he can whistle as well as an oyster-catcher. When the boat's lights are hung out at dusk he perches again long enough to sing an Angelus of his own.

A few years ago the Watcher was talking to a friend on the far point when this oyster-catcher came, whirling round his head in a tumult of cries. 'He wants me,' said the guardian, and away he went, the bird flying at his shoulder, to the oyster-catchers' shingle. Sure enough, the big tide had lipped the scrape and the four eggs were awash. The man put them back in the dimple, whistled to the agitated birds and went on. The same pair were circling overhead now as he talked. He seemed to have every reason, looking about the shore from colony to colony, to say 'my birds.'

I left him to make a further survey and climbed over the sand-

hills, tufted with long swaying grass, to the sheltered reach where the sheld-duck were beginning to nest. All about me were rabbit holes plentifully scored with bird tracks. My secret wish, that I might have the fortune to see a pair of the birds having a scrap with the rabbits on the subject of the yearly ejection order, hectoring and pecking them away, was not fulfilled. The rabbits had gone meekly enough, and the sheld-duck were making themselves cosy in the inmost heart of the burrows, lining them with down.

They knew I was there ; I had not the art of self-effacement ; my feet were the feet of a stranger. Out they came and joined their mates in the air, crying irritably to folk to go and leave them to themselves. They circled and settled on a brown basin left rich and dark by the tide and spread about it like a linked chain, staying long enough for me to feast my eyes on the sight : the rich red beaks glowing, the pale bodies gleaming ; they had a warm brown necklace, I saw, lying just where the Lord Mayor puts his chain. They rose in a swinging line, set to partners in the air and came curtsying to earth. I decided as I jerked my frozen limbs over the sand-hills that until I see the Point again and find something lovelier I shall think of the sheld-duck most dearly.

The Watcher was concerned for his tern. 'My birds are late,' he kept saying. 'They ought to be showing up by the 26th. Haven't been so late for years. Cold winds, I expect.'

We went along the angry, eastern side of the Point where the waves were smashing white on the shingle. I was wondering, as I bent against the wind, what it could tell of the migrants, how many scores of miles away it had scented them and passed on. They must be on the ocean. 'Somewhere out there,' the guardian said, waving a hand. He spoke of their presence and absence as one would speak of the colleges being up or down ; had left behind his days of marvelling greatly at the thought of that living cloud of tiny beings moving along in a vast and unfriendly sky.

I stared over the sea, wishing that out of the storm might come some of the wanderers, home at last, their battered little wings at rest. I myself was already battered. This keen air whipped up to a gale, and driving on to a spit of sand as exposed as a raft on the sea, stunned eyes and ears, and induced an odd drowsiness. Presently we crossed the diminished water and, still leaning on the wind, I made my way by an ancient cart-track across the outer saltings to the house that was a home. I sat down by the fire with nothing to say, only conscious of being out of that huge

tumult, shut up in the velvet stillness of a room. Night fell sheeted with rain. As the gusts took the window I could but think of the travelling birds, and trust that their instinct had kept them outside the area of storm, on a spring shore.

III.

OUR quay is a sorry affair, shored up by rotting timbers. At flood of tide, when the water-way that was once a harbour is brimming, it can be seen how badly the sea is mated with the land. And that is one thing ever and terribly constant in the sea : it can always come up twice a day and lay hands on these ragged defences, and no centuries piled up can make one wave old or decaying or pitiable.

Sea and land were better mated even two or three generations ago. Then these timbers, which now lean as they will, were stout, and in place of toy yachts there were the crowding masts and rig of sea vessels—clippers, schooners, brigs and brigantines, and cutters—from Marseilles, from the Baltic, from the Low Countries ; packets from Newhaven and London ; and the foreshore, now made an easy way for gliding cars, was the centre of a noble merchandise.

Here where the road goes idly by, or crumbles, or grows verdant, grain waggons came rolling and creaking from inland. There are old men who can remember a hundred of those golden, piled carts and four hundred horses tethered and stalled on the foreshore and about the winding streets, the granaries stocked with grain for outgoing ships. Foodstuffs for housewives' shelves, oil cake, timber and coal came by sea to the town and thence into outlying villages and hamlets. For children the shore could be a scene of daring adventure. They might find solid mountains of sugar lying handy, encased in thick shiny paper of a blue so entrancing that it seemed part of the sweetness it enclosed ; boxes of raisins and Bordeaux plums only wanting a clever finger. Then there was the clamour when the Frenchman or Dutchman was ready and the tide turning, and the ship calling to her friends ; the vessel slowly gliding away, lads and lasses shouting from the quay.

I have often tried to picture the yesterday of Blakeney—one or two hundred years ago : those great masts striking the sky, the gallant line of the bows for ever swinging away and coming back again ; the forgotten beauty of rows of broad-beamed vessels close moored in this deserted channel. I think I hear the foreign oaths and Norfolk sing-song blended, the clatter of sea-booted men

and horsemen, the shrewd talk of merchants and travellers on the quay ; the merry inns full of good food and clean beds ; the noise, the strength, the virility of the place.

There was always a seat by the fire and in the sun for the old longshoremen who could tell, quaveringly, of a still lustier Blakeney when their grandfathers were 'prentice boys. It was clear there was no pulling up the roots of the town. Those streams which gave Blakeney her ancient name of Snitterley had 'ground their corn and paid their tax, ever since Domesday Book.'

Good talkers, these men of yesterday were. It was before the time of forced learning, when the reading of a few books might make a man self-conscious. Now and again a scholar among them captured an old news-sheet and spelled out a few sentences :

The Speculation, from Oporto to Sligo, is lost on Tory Island.

The Commerce, Whippey, from Virginia to London, is drove into Harwich in a Gale of Wind.

The Enterprise, from Newfoundland to Lisbon, is captured by the Hirondelle, French Corvette.

The Union Vibert is captured and carried into Delft.

The Gute Enwarting Printz from Oporto to Hambro, is on shore at the Isle of Wight and full of water.¹

The listeners had memories for ships, and months afterward the name and fate of these vessels would be in their talk until, when the Newcastle and London men had come and gone a few times, there might easily be built up in one of these inns a vessel's history from that day when her keel was laid to this, when she was lost on Tory Island, or captured and carried into Delft.

Generations slipped away, leaving Blakeney secure, until the year came which saw the building of a branch railway a few miles inland. Slowly the trade was drawn away from the foreshore towns. One smithy, instead of a score, lighted its fires, and then only to make oyster-dredgers and such-like gear. There came a day when the last packet sailed back to London and Newcastle, when the sailors on the foreign ships became a name instead of an active and recurring presence. Those threads were broken which bound the salt marshes to the world ; sailors and farmers—England's best men—could find no profit in the town. The quay lay desolate.

But the mixing of these sturdy races, and the town's long and

¹ From *The Times* of December 4, 1798.

honourable history, left their mark on the shore. There is nothing down-at-heel in the quiet streets and alleys, and enough dignified and pleasantly proportioned houses are left to give the place a distinction which other sea-board towns may seek in vain.

They have swept away a row of old buildings on the quay to make a hotel for persons of wealth ; to the poor it is as inaccessible as the Hôtel de la Cité, Carcassonne ; but its lines are pleasant, and there could be no higher praise than to say the building is worthy to be neighbour of that long, low Georgian house at the end of the dyke. In the eyes of one wanderer it can easily seem that the finest building in Blakeney is an old brick granary climbing some hundred yards of the main street, one gable treading on another. To come down the winding way and suddenly see this ancient façade so mellowed and seasoned, in colour now like a tawny lily, now like a damask rose, now just brick, with grey-gold salt marshes going out from its feet to the sky, is to learn once more that brick can be beautiful in a happy setting. But then, bred in a county rich in native stone, I am something of a heretic in these matters. Brick and greenery together always demand an apology. 'And indeed, it should have been of stone, but the gods were poor.'

I imagine there are one or two old men drinking coffee and Marc on the streets of the Old Port of Marseilles who know the look of that granary I so admire, and could speak of Blakeney and her neighbour Cley as old friends. They would probably be pleased to learn that the 'Maisons du Quai' yonder have not yet been re-christened Sea View. They would be philosophic enough to admit that the inevitable fate of the town is to become a place where, at flood tide in summer, a few visitors sail up and down the channel. But I think they would find it hard to be one with those who safeguard the birds they and their forebears used to shoot on the marshes and over the Point. For a coast that buccaneers had prowled to become a wild bird sanctuary ! What if it was feared that the last bittern might be heard booming among the reeds down the coast ? What if the grey lag-geese, the black tern, the hen-harrier, the kite had become but a name ? What of it ? These old sailors would have thought nothing amiss, and only questioned the valour of the cook, had they been told of that present for a wedding feast (a little before their time) from someone 'out of marshland in Norfolk'—nine cranes, nine swans, sixteen bitterns, with a large number of other wild fowl.

These memories are but of a yesterday. Often when I wander along the Causey that divides the salt marshes from the fresh I must think of the ancient town clustered about the monastery built on the sounding shore. That was about 1296, when 'William de Roos (lord of the manor) and Maud his wife gave of their lands 13 acres and $\frac{1}{2}$ to God and the Virgin Mary that the Carmelite Friars might inhabit there.'

The stout little monastery was built; the prayer bell and the birds' notes went down the wind together, and many a still dawn must have had the marshes to themselves. I think I see the 'white' Brothers in their loosely woven, cream-grey homespun, going barefoot about the shore and into the outlying towns. The order had become a begging brotherhood a couple of generations before their day, and they inherited the mendicants' gifts and, no doubt, graces. For a poor community they were well housed, and a sturdy town life grew about them. Long before the Whitefriars came, a market charter had been granted to Blakeney. Flanders and East Anglia were deep in trade, as we can guess from a record of 1288 when a ship from Flanders drove on to the Point, and yielded up a cargo of 'cloth and other merchandise' valued at £14,000.

The market grew and had to be dealt with. The rolls tell of a statute relating to the sale of fish—an important matter when one convent close by could make a purchase of 186 codfish at a time. The men of the marshes had their reward in being good fishermen, for when the press gangs were busy in the reign of Richard II the fishermen of Blakeney, Cley and Cromer were spared. One of these fishermen left his stamp on the place. That was John of Blakeney, become citizen and fishmonger of London, who gave by will 'to 5 chaplains to pray for him, 10 years in this church and those of Cley, Wyveton, Sheryngham, Brynynggham, to each chaplain 5/- per annum.' John's will was made 1393, not so long after the Black Death but that a man felt he must think of his soul now, for any to-morrow, he remembered, might be too late.

I think I should have liked most of all to see the great fair of medieval Blakeney that drew the whole eastward shire into a gay clamour on the shore. It lasted many days, an important affair as well as a joyous, for here came careful housewives riding pillion with their husbands, seeking the rare things which they could not grow or make at home. They must think before they laid their pence down, for another purchase could not be made before summer brought another fair. For days oxen carts and heavy waggons

had laboured from inland, bringing all manner of things to be sold ; the rough tracks had seen many a procession converging on the marshes, strolling players and gleemen, with their tiny hurdy-gurdies tied round their necks, bagpipes, fiddles, lutes, recorders, certain pipes which seemed all the funnier if the player strode about on stilts. Whatever else, there was plenty of music and dancing, and I think I hear the gleemen singing their last rounds as dusk fell on the brimming tide. And laughter : the jugglers and mountebanks saw to that ; and solemn moments when the quacks were selling all the world's health in the space of a hand ; or a tale-teller was making it hard for you to breathe and listen at the same time.

The youth of the shore were thrown into an unspeakable excitement, and now had something stable in their memories to mark time and progress by. And when winter was blowing to destruction across the marshes they could sit by the fire and still talk of the fair.

While they were joying, some of the white brothers were trading, some, I have no doubt, were looking on, and some praying for the worldly and the frivolous in their cells. I see those shuffling homely figures everywhere on the shore. And it seems that old Blakeney died in 1538 when the monastery was put down and became a few simple sentences in a dusty roll.

'The site of this house, with the East and West closes, Kyll close, Tanner's acre and Hollyer's close, the stallage shops, cellars, fair mercate and customs here were granted February 6th in the 33rd Henry VIII to William Read, who in the same year had license to alien it to Richard Gresham and Richard had licence for the same in the 36th of that king to Peter Scotton. John his son and heir had livery of it in the 4th of Elizabeth. . . . On September 1 in the 2nd of King James . . . Oldman conveyed it to . . . Chadwick.'

And there the story seems to end. In any case, the 2nd of King James is very near Blakeney's yesterday.

IV.

It is midsummer, and I have got the marshes to myself for five days. For five days I need not look at or speak to a person out of this kind house ; I need not read a newspaper nor have any opinions ; I need not stand up against the winds of knowledge

and derision that beat upon me when I am in the world. Winds of the marshes may buffet me instead. The stores of learning I hoped to gain on marsh birds I have not gained ; but I cannot, like the Psalmist, be truly sorry for my sin. I fear now that if I had to describe birds unfamiliar I could not be nearly so exact as Sir Thomas Browne was when he was writing to that Dr. Merrett in London, in 1668.

‘Have you [wrote Sir Thomas] a may chitt a small dark gray bird about the bignesse of a stint wch cometh about May and stayeth butt a moneth ?

‘Have you a dorhawke a bird as bigge as a pigeon with a wide throat bill as little as a titmous and white fethers in the tayle and paned like an hawke ?

‘Have you a Yarwhelp Barker or Latrator a marsh bird about the bignesse of a Godwitt ?’

I shall never know if it is possible to have learning and at the same time the gladness of spirit that untrained eyes and ears may foster ; but I do know that I would rather look out on these level wastes and see the wind and sun toss their colour and light about from ridge to ridge, and see the birds spangling the sky, than satisfy myself as to the exact species that make the sanctuaries their home. For while I am studying marks and flight the day has changed, the shining hours have gone, leaving me behind. Some person who loves birds and knowledge too, and carries his learning like a flower, will one day doubtless satisfy my curiosity about certain kinds I see and hear and cannot name. I shall be like the skua and snatch the morsel from him while he is on his way to put it down in a catalogue. But now it is midsummer, and by a miracle the moon has been at the full, it appears, for three nights.

I cannot get used to the new wideness of the marshes. They have grown into a plain out of which day refuses to go. The sun seems determined not to sink into the sea but to spend the night upon the Point. And before the sun has at last gone down beyond the oyster-catchers’ ridge, the moon is up. So that it might appear there is no night upon the saltings and no rest for the birds rearing fledglings there. They are constantly rising and wailing between the sun and moon upon the shore because lovers and dreamers are walking on the dyke.

The Point seems like a lazy arm curled under a sky of bewildering blue that changes near the horizon to a shimmering turquoise

mirage. The yellow sand-hills dance in the heat, and the shingle beaches seem to dissolve in quivering light. Sheets of bright green samphire deck the wastes, stonecrop lies in primrose-coloured patches; there is sea-lavender, rosy thrift in flower; even the *suæda* thickets are verdant and gay. Most delightful of all, white campion is blowing freely, setting its waxen coolness against the riot of warmth summer has brought to the Point. It is hard to believe that this is the unkind shore I trod one April day, hard to believe the ancient waggon-road across the marshes is the same.

A book on the roads of England would not be complete without this track, scored by oxen waggons when Blakeney was young. It crosses the high road from King's Lynn to Cromer and plunges into the saltings, seeking the hardest places, winding round in that patient unconcerned manner that makes for endurance and beauty. Half-way to the tide flats a slighter track crosses it, a sandy way hard bitten into the earth. Rarely have I looked on anything more barren and desolate than this little cross-road in the heart of the salty waste. As I stand I can see nothing living but a shepherd whom I greeted on my way some two miles inland, his twenty score of clean-sheared, black-faced Suffolks about him. He is now as small as a twig on a tree, and the sheep might be a shingle patch in the saltings.

These marshes at midsummer suddenly take my mind away to certain stretches of the Camargue. Just so summer stains and enriches the hard-beaten grass and shrubs of the Provençal marshes. If for my shepherd yonder there had been someone herding young bulls, and for the sound of grass cutting in the glebe the pleasant bustle of a little *vendage*, and if instead of the North Sea there had been the azure line of the Mediterranean, the likeness would be whole.

There is an uproar unbelievable in the ternery. The air is linked and chained with flying silver as some hundreds of tern rise shrieking and complaining of a stranger's foot. I look at these flashing, saucy birds with some respect. They know a great deal more about the world than I; their chicks, now balls of fluff lying terrified on the ground, will develop an amazing strength and staying power, and in three or four months be off to Egypt, Africa, South America, China.

It seems always to be feeding time. The tern have the sea banks at their door and need but plunge to get their sand-eels and 'white-bait,' hurry back with the tit-bits. But they have to

run the gauntlet of enemies in the sky. A gull or that naughty skua will swoop down and take their children's food out of their mouth. It is no good using hard and bitter words; the babes are starving at home. Back the patient tern go for more food.

The sheld-duck, who were lately showing how beautiful courtship and marriage could be, are not to be seen. Their children are hatched and gone out to seek their fortune; at this moment one or two are swimming, bold as brass, on the Pit. A few of the baby plovers are down on the sand below the shingle practising for the half-mile, it would seem.

There was a tiny brown ball moving across the gleaming tide-bank. Fastening my eyes on it I went to the spot and found a ringed plover chick, stiff with fright. The morsel stayed, crouched on tiny stilts. I gave it a gentle touch to start it off and then had to be very nimble with my eyes to keep it in sight for while I could count ten. The stilts moving at an unbelievable speed, the body rocking uncertainly, gave a delightful and clownish entertainment.

Just out of my vision I was aware of another similar movement in the same direction. Where the mites came to rest I did not see. But presently the mother and father, who had been crying in circles above my head, came down on a bank of shingle and began running to the nest, calling in little notes. The stilt-walkers followed them, top speed, then suddenly stopped. The mother stopped too, turned round and called again, in a shower of small notes. Suddenly the babes shot forward; as suddenly stopped. And so by stages they were shepherded home.

Not in their midsummer riot shall I remember the bird marshes, but on the days of a changing grey sky. Then at low tide the shelving banks shine as if they were silvered over, and the silver in the misted sky gleams in rivalry. When dusk falls on the marshes on such a day there seems no need to fear the coming of that foe of all peace—the gay world. The gay world would only see the stray trees, wind-warped and desolate, the fields where the tillage pushes down to the saltings, even the hay-stooks looking lonely on the edge of the waste and as if early garnered lest a wind should rise from the deep and sweep the harvest away. And most of all the gay world would seek at dusk the lights of a promenade to shut the night and the marshes out. Much more will it be, I think, that the world is shut out, sent empty away.

SPARROWFIELD STORIES.

BY F. H. DORSET.

IV. A BED OF ROSES.

THE new drawing-room of No. 8 Paulett Avenue was over-full of furniture, fine but solid antiques salvaged from more spacious days in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Vaizey. Behind a genuine Queen Anne tea-tray old Mrs. Vaizey sat pouring tea for her first caller since her removal from the old Georgian house at Claverdown to a six-roomed villa at Sparrowfield, and before her, in a large chintz-covered chair, her first caller sat babbling politely and wondering whether she liked or disliked her hostess. It was uncannily difficult to come to a decision on that question.

The Prices dwelt just round the corner in Lynn Road, and Marion Price had called thus early because of a letter from mutual friends and the warm impulse of her heart. When you are young, pretty, happy in the possession of a young husband, a young baby, and a toy home of a young house, and when you are confidently expecting that the baby will grow into a man and the small house into a mansion as your husband's ambition fulfils itself, the spectacle of childless old age compelled to reverse this process and descend from a mansion to a villa can be poignant. Marion had called as soon as she felt certain that the Vaizey household was settled in, and now she sat drinking tea with a feminine enigma, an old lady with a small upright figure, dark ironical eyes, a voice which attracted and strange hands which repelled. The hands, moving deliberately among the teacups, fascinated Marion's attention by their incongruity. They were large and peculiarly white, their backs faintly dusted with a silver down of hair not quite so white as the waved locks dressed high on Mrs. Vaizey's head. They were muscular, with long spatulate fingers, adorned only by a heavy gold wedding-ring, and they seemed to Marion, who always noticed hands, to be singularly remorseless; masculine hands entirely out of keeping with the tiny figure which bore them. The old lady's skirts were long, and Marion wondered whether they were designed to conceal over-large feet.

The month was March, verging into April, sweet with a sudden lull from tempest into sunshine. A long window giving upon the narrow garden of No. 8 stood open to an afternoon of unexpected warmth, and on either side of a strip of new-laid turf wide borders had been made ready for planting. Already a round flower-bed, set some few paces from the open window like an enormous mole-hill, as much out of proportion to turf and garden as were Mrs. Vaizey's hands to her body, had been filled with rose-bushes. Mrs. Vaizey observed Marion's glance resting upon them.

'That's my particular rose-bed,' she said. 'I've always had one ever since we were married; so I decided to have one here. It is not the best time of year for transplanting, but I still expect to have a fair show in June.'

'In this place the soil's rather light for roses,' said Marion; 'ours don't do very well; but then all these gardens are so new. And the *things* Bob turned up when he started digging to make ours! The builders seemed to have left the place full of odd bricks and tins and even bags of nails, and I think there must have been a rubbish dump for the older houses on our site, for Bob dug up an awful old pair of stays—real stays, you know, relics, all full of whale-bone; and I don't suppose that the builders' men wore *them*!'

Mrs. Vaizey smiled.

'True,' she replied. 'I suppose that it might be said of any garden, in these new suburbs built on ancient soil, that it is in some sort a grave of the past. A number of curious things go underground. Our grandmothers' buttons and our family skeletons.'

'And sometimes they turn up again when a new generation begins to dig,' said Marion.

'And then,' supplemented old Mrs. Vaizey, brightly ironical behind her teapot, 'the new generation is shocked at the garments and morals of its forbears, and continue to bury its own rubbish for the enlightenment of its grandchildren.'

Marion laughed, responsive to the dry music of her hostess's voice.

'Oh no!' she corrected, 'we use incinerators, and burn our discarded pasts!'

'Very wise,' commented Mrs. Vaizey. 'Ah, there's my husband!'

Someone had opened and closed the front door and now rattled

a walking-stick into the umbrella-stand and approached the drawing-room whistling tunelessly. This somebody proved to be a tall grey wraith of an old gentleman, cut upon debonair lines and wearing the short pointed beard of the older-fashioned type of Frenchman. He bowed to Marion, a delicate spark of polite admiration kindling in his very blue eyes, and she thought involuntarily, 'What a lovely old thing he is! He belongs a century back at least! No wonder she's so fond of him!' The mutual friend of the Vaizeys and Prices had already circulated a report of a Darby and Joan devotion.

'My husband,' repeated Mrs. Vaizey. 'Oliver, this is Mrs. Price, the Rowlatts' friend and our near neighbour.'

Mr. Vaizey took an upholstered chair on Marion's right and accepted a cup of tea.

'I met your husband once, years ago, Mrs. Price,' he said. 'To be accurate, I helped him to catch a perfectly splendid newt. Rowlatt had brought him over to Claverdown with some youngsters of his own. Emma Reid helped too, I remember, Annie, and we put the beastie to live among the plants in your conservatory. Next day I found him dead—someone had accidentally or on purpose dropped a great stone on him.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Vaizey, 'that's the frequent consequence of taking beasties or humans out of their proper environment. Somebody drops a stone on them. Myself, I detest a creepy-crawly, whether reptile or human!' And she poured fresh boiling water into the teapot as though drowning an enemy. Mr. Vaizey regarded her violence with tempered amusement, and Marion thought with a twinge of discomfort, '*She* squashed the newt. And they may be devoted to each other, but all the same there's some old teasing squabble between them. I believe she's a jealous woman.'

A first call ought to be brief, but such brevity was not easy in the company of these Vaizeys. The old gentleman in particular was quite fascinating, and when he arose and offered to accompany Marion down the road to see whether the newt-boy had returned from the City Mrs. Vaizey's visitor did not refuse his escort. Out in the bright spring afternoon he expressed the hope that she would often drop in to cheer up his wife.

'Her health is failing a good deal now,' he explained. 'She overdid herself absurdly, insisting on planting her rose-trees herself while I was out. At least, she planted the central one. That astonishing old jobbing gardener Earth did the rest, but she wouldn't let him touch the centre of the bed. She dug a hole and planted that

rose-bush when nobody was about—just to see if she could, she said. My dear wife is a very obstinate woman, Mrs. Price, and the doctor says that she has overstrained her heart.'

'In planting one rose-tree?' asked Marion incredulously.

'Hardly that, of course, but apparently she worked so feverishly and dug such a deep hole to begin with that she put the finishing touch to a rather tiresome condition. So now she will have to sit still a good deal, and we are far from most of our old friends.'

So began an acquaintance which ripened rapidly into friendship, although on Marion Price's part there was always a warmer affection for the old gentleman than for the old lady. It was easy to detect that Mrs. Vaizey possessed the stronger character, but her wit was sometimes mordant, and became more so as rapidly increasing infirmity chained her more and more to her arm-chair. Her husband hovered solicitously about her, and Marion formed the habit of dropping in almost every day on her journeys into the town to discover whether there were any commissions to be executed. Summer came, warm and fruitful, and the round rose-bed broke triumphantly into bloom. Mrs. Vaizey's chair was set continually by the open French window whence she could gaze upon her roses. They seemed to exercise for her a peculiar fascination.

On a sultry August afternoon Marion found her alone, lost in contemplation, with her lap full of neglected knitting. The crimson rose-bush in the middle of the bed bore only a flower or two, but those of superb quality, and Mrs. Vaizey's gaze was fixed upon them.

'Successful,' she said aloud, 'most successful, my treatment!'

'Of your roses?' asked Marion, putting a fresh library book down beside her hostess. 'Yes, they've done wonderfully for a first year. What did you give them?'

Mrs. Vaizey chuckled, and Marion, glancing at her quickly, surprised something oddly Satanic in her smile. The old lady continued to look at her roses as she spoke, paying little heed to her guest.

'Oh,' she said, 'Earth supplied the correct artificial manure to speed them up, but my treatment went deeper. I put something into that bed that worked wonders towards solving the problem of . . . perfecting my flowers, but I never told Earth. There's a talisman in that flower-bed, my girl, a talisman to conserve love and roses alike, but even Oliver does not know of it. Don't mention it to him, or to anybody, will you? You didn't think I was superstitious, did you?'

Marion felt a trifle confused.

'Are you joking, Mrs. Vaizey?' she asked.

Mrs. Vaizey chuckled afresh.

'My dear,' she said, 'it is the privilege of the old to speak in parables, but I want you to promise me something. Whenever I die I want you *and* Oliver to dig up that rose-tree. Dig deep, till you find my talisman. It won't affect me then for you both to know that I was . . . superstitious. I shall go first—oh yes, that's quite certain!'

'Please don't talk like that, Mrs. Vaizey!' exclaimed Marion, much disconcerted, 'but of course I'll do whatever you want.'

In September the widowed Mrs. Rowlatt, one-time a country neighbour of the Vaizeys and newly bereft of her husband, came to stay with the Prices. A year older than Mrs. Vaizey, she appeared to be ten years younger, and her memory was astonishing. She also possessed a fluent tongue. Of her Marion tentatively enquired whether she thought the Vaizeys were quite as devoted a couple as they seemed to be. Mrs. Rowlatt laughed.

'They are utterly devoted,' she said. 'That gentle bickering is part of their affection; it gives spice to their love-story. But I'll admit that she has always been jealous. Dear Oliver never gave her grounds in himself for any jealousy, but women have always found him too charming. I've always been convinced personally that Emma Reid left them for that single reason. Oliver was too attractive for her peace of mind, and so, being a proud young woman, she picked a quarrel and went.'

'Who was Emma Reid? Mr. Vaizey mentioned her when we first met. He said that she helped him and Bob, when he was a little boy and had come over with your children to Claverdown, to catch a newt. I thought then that Mrs. Vaizey didn't seem pleased.'

'Ah yes! That was the very day before she left them so suddenly and sent that astonishing letter from Town. In those days you know, the Vaizeys were quite wealthy and very philanthropic, Emma Reid came to Mrs. Vaizey as a kind of companion-secretary to assist the good works. She was quite alone in the world except for relatives in India. Annie Vaizey would have been about fifty then, I suppose, and they'd been married for twenty years. Emma Reid was twenty-five, and they treated her like a daughter. But it's always my belief that she fell in love with Oliver. He was very young for his age then, though he's a little Annie's senior.'

‘What happened?’

‘Really, I never knew all the details, and the Vaizeys didn’t care to talk about it. It seemed so like gross ingratitude for their kindness. She had some sort of private upset with Annie on the evening of the afternoon you mention, and in the night she just packed a handbag and left while everyone was asleep. Took only a few clothes and all her small valuables and money and departed, leaving a note on her bedroom mantelpiece merely saying she’d gone to London and would write from there. Annie was so troubled that she went up to London herself next day to try and trace her, but she failed, and next morning came a most insulting letter with no address, posted in Town, saying that she left with them all the clothing and gifts they had given her and was cutting them out of her life and going abroad as a governess. Of course, after that they dropped her. It’s a sore point still, and it was very tactless of Oliver to mention her name like that. They never heard from her again.’

‘How extraordinary! She must have been a queer girl.’

‘That’s the odd part about her behaviour. She was really rather delightful as a rule, and not unlike Annie herself. She wrote nearly all Annie’s letters for her when she didn’t type them, and even their handwriting had a strong resemblance, though there was absolutely no relationship. Only she was taller than Annie; a vivid girl. I’ve often wondered what became of her.’

Mrs. Rowlatt lapsed into reminiscence. She began to describe the lost glories of Claverdown, to which Marion’s rather preoccupied mind paid scant attention until she caught a sudden reference to a kiln.

‘A kiln? At Claverdown?’ she exclaimed, surprised. ‘What ever for?’

Mrs. Rowlatt rebuked her gently.

‘You haven’t been listening,’ she said. ‘I said a great brick incinerator for rubbish, *like* a kiln. It was a hygienic fad of Annie’s. Annie was a very active woman, Marion, with a touch of the vagabond in her disposition. You’d never think it now, but she used to enjoy the masculine side of gardening in those days; digging, and burning rubbish. She was amazingly muscular for her size. Have you ever noticed her hands?’

‘I don’t quite care for them,’ admitted Marion. ‘They’re so out of keeping with her face.’

‘Annie’s a bunch of contradictions,’ agreed Mrs. Rowlatt.

'There's a streak of cruelty in her and the most wonderful kindness. Oliver is the only man in the world who could have been continuously happy with her, but he has been and is. Poor fellow, he'll feel it when she goes.'

'Why, is she really so ill as all that?'

'I don't think he knows it,' said Mrs. Rowlatt, 'but she is.'

'It struck me,' said Marion musingly, 'that sometimes she's just a little queer in the head. Isn't she rather superstitious?'

'Superstitious? Annie Vaizey? Dear me, no! She's always been a most practical woman!'

'Well, it was only something she said some time ago about a talisman—nothing important,' said Marion, blushing guiltily. 'She seems to like me rather better than I like her; and yet I *do* like her, Mrs. Rowlatt.'

The Vaizeys' old friend nodded comprehension.

'I've felt like that about Annie Vaizey myself, all these years,' she said. 'She's an inexplicable woman. Now tell me, aren't you just a little in love with her Oliver, old fellow though he is now? She'd like that, you know. Now that they are both old she feels it's quite safe for pretty young women to love her Oliver, and a compliment to her own good taste. What is risky at fifty is safe at seventy-seven.'

'Mr. Vaizey is the dearest old gentleman I've ever met,' said Marion enthusiastically. 'Everyone likes him. He has the knack of belonging to a past generation and of enjoying the new without losing his attractiveness. He's older even than his time in some ways; there's an eighteenth-century flavour about him, however colloquial he becomes. He makes me think of a fine piece of antique silver, worn thin and reflecting the present day without changing in itself. I'd like to see him with a sword and ruffle.'

She uttered the same sentiment in a modified form to Mrs. Vaizey herself somewhat later, but Mrs. Vaizey was trenchant.

'The eighteenth century,' she said, 'is an over-rated period of culture. Gentlemen polished their manners in company and didn't wash thoroughly. The moral tone was quite as shocking as to-day and they talked much more sententiously. Wives could be whipped. Don't talk to me about the eighteenth century! It began in brutality and ended in humbug.'

'But still,' protested Marion, 'wasn't it better than the period of poke bonnets and whiskers? It was graceful, anyhow!'

'It may have been, but it wasn't half so comfortable. As an

old Victorian who remembers her grandmother I can swear to that. But I agree. Oliver is much less of a Victorian than I am. He's French on his mother's side . . . some of his notions are still Gallic. I've cured him of others, in the course of forty years or so. Poor Oliver! He misses the setting of Claverdown, but myself I am quite reconciled to any place, at my age, where I can have my cups of tea and my rose-bed. In fact it is more comfortable to die with few belongings in a little house than in a large house with a burden of responsibility. I brought away all that mattered to me, and we travel light, nowadays.'

'I think,' said Marion, warmed into admiration, 'that you are a very courageous traveller, Mrs. Vaizey. Nothing would daunt you.'

'The Devil,' said Mrs. Vaizey, with one of her vehement out-flashings, 'may do his worst, as far as I'm concerned. I've had a run for my money. I hope ultimately to have the last word when I am extinguished, and I maintain that death is extinction. Under certain circumstances there is no more harm in snuffing out a human life than in snuffing out a candle.'

'I'm sorry,' said Marion, 'but that sounds quite horrible to me,' and mentally she endorsed Mrs. Rowlatt's dictum that Annie Vaizey was an inexplicable woman.

During the early autumn the inexplicable woman became more and more of a sick one, and the very sick woman clung persistently to her chair in the drawing-room and refused to lie up in a front bedroom which deprived her of the view of her roses. These, thanks to exceptional weather, enjoyed a brief second blooming during St. Luke's Summer, and a shrunk little figure with large restless hands that fumbled over knitting and turned the pages of many books sat almost daily by the long window. Mrs. Vaizey's sharp nose became beak-like, and on either side of it a dark eye glittered defiance at a fading world. Poor Mr. Vaizey looked troubled as he hovered in perpetual unthanked attendance, for some strange perversity of affection sharpened his wife's tongue against him more searchingly than ever. It began to occur to the observant Marion Price that the dauntless Annie was becoming afraid of the extinction in which she believed, and although she routed the Vicar with contempt when the Prices tactfully introduced him, yet perhaps it was less easy to say 'Ah-ha!' to the Devil sitting down than standing up. Mrs. Vaizey no longer had the full use of her legs.

The warm weather lingered, although at any moment the shrewd

fingers of frost might pluck it away. A red bloom still hung on the central rose-bush, deeply crimson, trembling on the verge of dissolution, and the figure in the winged grandfather chair added a rug and a foot-warmer to its comforts but remained obstinately all day by the open window, no longer knitting and reading little. It had no longer the strength to shake a dagger of lath, but it still possessed power to crawl to its post of observation, whence it watched the rose-bed as though it waited for the rising of a ghost with the falling of the rose, and daily Marion caught her first glimpse of the old lady over the tops of the rose-bushes as she entered of privilege by the side door into the Vaizeys' garden.

Annie Vaizey sat thus on the last hot afternoon before St. Luke's Summer really ended. Her husband had just left her for his daily walk, after tucking her rug closely about her, and in reply to his dutiful query whether she wanted anything before Mrs. Price came in to see her he had received a querulous request to be left alone for a nap. Possibly she had really been on the verge of sleep in that drowsy afternoon stillness when the rose broke suddenly into falling petals and the expected ghost arose. At any rate, her face was averted and hidden against the high wing of her padded chair and her large hands clutched its arm convulsively when Marion came upon her. It was the attitude of a child, terrified and alone among strangers, but the visage which she turned about at Marion's scared salutation bore no traces of the child. She looked up into the fresh face above her as Dives looked across to Lazarus, and for a moment her stiff lips refused her speech. She shook her head in reply to Marion's exclamation.

'Wait!' she commanded at last. She pointed at the rose-bed as she spoke, and again speech hung suspended between brain and lip, breaking through finally in urgent fragments.

'All wrong!' said Mrs. Vaizey. 'Can't snuff out, can't, can't! . . . Oliver mustn't know after all . . . meant to punish him . . . dig alone, you; keep it dark, my rubbish. Carried it about, buried it. Bury it with me—no, not that, they'd know. Oh God, what can we do with it?' The big hands beat helplessly on the arms of her chair.

Young Mrs. Price pulled herself together. All that was young and pitiful rose to meet the old woman's distress, while deep within her repugnance strove with pity. Even as she looked down into that distracted face its brilliant eyes darkened and glazed. The beating hands fell idle as they lay.

'Whatever it is,' said Marion Price, speaking distinctly as to one grown deaf, 'I'll see to it for you. Don't worry. And now I'll call your maid.'

But when the maid came she fetched the doctor.

'I think you are right,' said old Mr. Vaizey heavily a few days after the funeral. 'Her mind did wander a little towards the end, I agree, but just before her seizure she did express this wish for you to have the red rose-bush, and the odd desire that you should be left alone to dig it up for yourself. Do as you like about it, dear Mrs. Price, but don't let me see you doing it.'

'This evening, then, just after tea,' agreed Marion. 'It's only a small bush and I can manage quite well. She wanted me to take it so much, you know. She had some superstition about it.'

The weather had broken, first into tears and then into a cool grey stillness tinged with frost. The afternoons were shortening rapidly, but a certain furtive dread prompted Marion to choose the dusky hour after tea for her pledged excavation, and not to mention the matter to her husband. Old Mrs. Vaizey had plainly buried something of a guilty secret under the red rose-bush. Perhaps she *had* just been growing a little queer mentally even before their removal to Sparrowfield; perhaps she suffered from some form of delusion, induced by the bankruptcy proceedings, or had buried some item of past possessions which should have passed to a creditor, although certain creditors had been kind, as witness the Queen Anne teapot. Whatever it was, tragic or ludicrous, delusion or fact, it seemed kinder to investigate it first by that charitable half-light of evening which covers a multitude of sins. So moved, Marion proceeded to her task in the twilight.

The small rose-bush was lifted without difficulty, and laid aside on the turf for transplanting to the Prices' garden. The soil beneath it was heavier than much of the Sparrowfield earth, but it yielded readily enough to her delving, although a hole some three feet deep was dug before a metal box with a barrel-shaped lid, two feet by one in measurement, came to view. It was surprisingly light, a mere shell of steel, fastened by a skewer pushed through a couple of staples, but closing practically air-tight by means of this primitive fastening. Marion carried it to the end of the garden and opened it tremulously. Could Mrs. Vaizey ever once have entertained a lover other than her Oliver? Were there letters here to be destroyed unread while heartless curiosity whispered temptation

in one's ear? She recalled her first conversation with the old lady and her own light-hearted statement concerning the present generation: 'We keep incinerators and burn our discarded pasts,' and even as she remembered it the lid fell open, and she found herself staring stricken at the contents; the fire-rusted steel busk of an old-fashioned pair of stays, some small fragments of charred bone, a handful of fine white dust—and a signet ring which had never seen the fire and bore the crest of Oliver Vaizey.

Involuntarily Marion closed the box sharply and stood holding it and gazing with horrified eyes into the gathering dusk of the Vaizey garden. Next door an electric light leapt brightly into illumination for an instant before a curtain was drawn. A loud-speaker near at hand proclaimed the Children's Hour through an open window-chink. A cat mewed in the raw shrubbery, and distantly sounded the heavy traffic on the Great North Road.

But above these sounds and through the darkness Marion Price heard with the terrified ear of her mind Mrs. Rowlatt's garrulous speculative tones.

'She was really rather delightful . . . taller than Annie . . . a vivid girl. I've often wondered what became of her.'

NINE MEN WHO 'DISCOVERED' AMERICA.

BY ROGER POCOCK.

FOR five centuries Christopher Columbus has laboured under the totally unjust suspicion that he discovered America, whereas he is really the last of many explorers who found the New World. He has indeed a perfect alibi, and a brief statement of his case will clear him of all suspicion.

Quite early in the field were Manco Capac and his sister-wife, the founders of the famous Inca dynasty in Peru. They were almost certainly Polynesian, a people who had seaworthy ships up to two hundred and fifty tons burden, and were navigators as far back perhaps as the Christian era.

The first explorer, however, for whom we have actual dates, was an Afghan gentleman, native of Cabul, which was then the great headquarters of the Buddhist missions. The very respectable Chinese historian Ma Tuan-Lin says that this Hui Shen, attended by five Buddhist monks, departed from Cabul in A.D. 458, and travelled overland to the coast of China. As these six clergymen had never seen salt water, and certainly were not mariners, they must have shipped as passengers with one of the packets running to Kamschatka. Thence they sailed eastward, by way of the Aleutians and the North American coast, a distance of sixty-five hundred miles to Fusang, a name which means Far East. The coast was familiar to the Chinese, who had indeed a fairly correct chart of the West Indies, and even knew the ocean beyond, thirty-two hundred miles wide. As to Fusang, the country of the agave and the prickly pear, the place-names show that it included Central America and Mexico. The name of the Buddha, Gautama, is reflected in Guatemala, Land of Guatama. From this comes also the name of Prince Guatemotzin. The nationality of the Lord Buddha was Sakhya, reflected in the place-names Zacatecas, Sacatepec, Zacatlan, Sacapulas, Oaxaca. A Buddhist priest was *lama*, and a Mexican priest was *tlama*. The Mixtec high priest was Tay-sacca; and Sakhyamuni may be reflected in Chaac-mal, to whom there is a very well-known statue. Moreover, Hui Shen Bikshu, to give the explorer his full name and title, is actually remembered in Mexico

as Wi-shi-pecosha, of the pale complexion and the long robe, who taught the people to live righteously, soberly, and at peace. He suffered persecution, and suddenly disappeared, leaving his footprint on a rock—as all good culture-heroes ought to do—near the village of Magdalena, where the people erected a statue to his memory. It is possible also that the Rev. Hui Shen was the gentleman in a Tartar hat, attended by a brace of elephants, who is portrayed upon one of the big Maya steles in Guatemala. Here indeed is a very interesting puzzle, because the elephant was officially an extinct animal in America, whereas his adventures, as the god presiding over the maize crop, form the whole theme of the famous Maya book known as the Vienna Codex. Certainly the Buddhist mission and the native priests ordained by Hui Shen seem to have reformed the native governments and customs of that strange Maya race. He says that they had abundance of copper but no iron, no soldiers, no fortresses, or walled cities. In the year A.D. 499 he returned to China, where the Emperor caused his report to be engrossed in the Imperial archives.

Much more famous than Hui Shen was another foreign missionary who seems to have been a bearded European, and known to the Toltecs as the Bird Serpent—*Quetzal-coatl*. To his beloved memory they built the temple of Cholula, which is four times as big as the Great Pyramid.

It must be admitted that Manco Capac, Hui Shen, and *Quetzal-coatl* were mere foreigners, and all of us share a certain prejudice. They were not players in any game of ours. They don't count, whereas the discovery of America by Europeans is one of the greatest events in our history. That story begins with the Christian idea of eating fish on Fridays and in Lent as being less painful than fasting. The demand for fish, especially from North Africa, was not to be met by the scant supply from the Mediterranean. Prices were high enough to encourage merchants, who came with wine for sale to Wales and Ireland. They wanted fish, dried, smoked, or salted for shipment; and the wine was a great inducement. The thirsty Celts took kindly to the fishing, the industry was of rapid growth, and the most profitable fish was the cod of the deep banks. But cod will not keep fresh. It is a waste of time to catch them unless there are islands within easy reach where they can be split and sun-dried. Exploring in search of cod banks and drying-grounds, the Gaels of Ireland and the Cymry of Wales discovered what is known to-day as the North Atlantic

Bridge. Where the water is deep for cod, there are plenty of halibut, so that, what with the current known as the North Atlantic Drift, and occasional gales driving the smacks into waters hitherto unknown, the Bridge was crossed, by way of the Rockall and St. Kilda Banks, the Shetland, Færoe, Lousy Bank, the Icelandic, Labrador and Grand Banks of Newfoundland. Of course for that remote age we have no official fishery returns, but we have instead brave legends of St. Brendan's Isle, and Hi Brasil before we come to something more definite, the discovery in A.D. 795 of Ireland-i-Mikla, Great Ireland.>

In this record one must not expect the slightest allusion to fish, the historians being monks, partial to cod but very much more interested in the little missions which followed in the wake of the fishery. There seem to have been colonies of anchorites scattered along the American coast from Chesapeake Bay to Florida.

The next link in this long chain is to be found in Scandinavian history.> In *Heimskringla* we have the story of Harald of the Fair Hair, pledged to the lady of his affections that he would neither cut nor comb his locks until he could offer to her the throne of Norway. The man became such an intolerable and outrageous nuisance that many of the Norwegian gentry sought homes west-over-seas, founding new earldoms in the British Isles. Among the exiles were Ingolf, and his young partner Leif, with their two longships, searching for land-takes on the Icelandic coast. In 870 Leif entered Broadfirth, and there found one of the Irish anchorite colonies. The monks told him that they desired to be in a state of pilgrimage, but they recked not where. They told him all about Great Ireland, the continent to the westward.

Here the Sagas take up the Icelandic part of the story.

During the next two centuries Iceland was settled with four small republics roughly federated. And in the Broadfirth Province Bear, the Broadwick champion, got into trouble, as men will, the lady in the case being Thurid of Frodis Water. For this cause Bear went into Lesser Outlawry, departing with his ship. There was no news of him, and Thurid, with his son Kiartan, mourned him for dead.

In the year 916, a generation later, the merchant Gudleif, from the Viking earldom of Dublin, homeward bound for Iceland, was driven by storms far to the south and west until he came to a land unknown. Here he beached his ship on the shores of a noble forest, where he and his seamen partners were captured by Red

Indians. Lashed to the trees, they watched the tribal council debating as to whether they should be burned or held as slaves. And then there came down out of the forest a procession of horsemen, led by an aged, bearded, and most majestic chief who spoke to them in Icelandic, asking for news of Broadfirth, of the Lady Thurid, and of her son Kiartan. He had the prisoners set at liberty. He had their ship provisioned and watered for the homeward voyage. He would not give his name, but when they parted he took from his arm Bear's Odin-ring of Priest-right to be given to the Lady Thurid, and his sword for Kiartan. As to horses in America we need not question the truth of the story, for Bear, departing into exile, would have shipped his live-stock, and bred ponies while he reigned as a Red Indian chief.

< In the selection of nine principal discoverers of America, it is fair to include Manco Capac, Hui Shen, *Quetzal-coatl*, and to couple Bear of Broadwick with Gudleif of Dublin. The fifth discoverer was Ari Marson, shipwrecked on the 'Florida' coast in the year 981. Sixth in the list comes Gunnbiorn, an Iclander driven by foul weather far to the westward of Snow Fell until he sighted the mountain scarp called Black Shirt because it was shaped like a chain hauberk or byrnie. This was the real discovery of Greenland, but nobody knows why a big mountain should have been called the Skerries, mere reefs in a seaway. Let us consider next the sequel to this finding of Gunnbiorn's Skerries.

In 983 came the trial of Eric the Red at the Holy Fell assize in the Icelandic province of Broadfirth. > This great Icelandic gentleman was a master mariner, a gainful trader, and a man of substance. So terribly was the country overcrowded that his land-take was that uninhabitable scrag of lava, known as Axe Isle, a fang in the terrible jaws of Hvammsfirth, set in the racing tides and breaking surf. Building his house there, he had need of a set of dais boards which had been lent to Thorgest Skinflint, his mainland neighbour. Thorgest refused to return the timber, so Eric collected it, and was hauling across the winter ice when he was beset by the miser's three elderly sons. They had the misfortune to be killed, and Thorgest brought suit against Eric for Greater Outlawry. He could command the help of a couple of hundred spearmen, and the services as counsel of young Turbulent the Priest, the most powerful man in the province, 'slow to wrath, but very deep in hatred.' Eric had only one friend, Turbulent's uncle, who was known as Slaying Stir, because he suffered from

homicidal mania, and was never really popular. The trial took place at the Spring Assize, with Arnkeld the Priest, a just man, as Speaker of the Law, and a bench of thirty-six judges. It was a debate between Turbulent the Priest and Slaying Stir, memorable for deadly malice veiled by magnificent rhetoric. Stir secured a sentence of Lesser Outlawry, and a safe passage to the boats for Eric and his seamen, beset as they were by Thorgest's two hundred spearmen.

Banished from Iceland, Eric departed into exile with his household and oar-partners, searching to the westward for Gunnbiorn's Skerries, and making his landfall at Black Shirt Mountain in Greenland. He named the country Greenland because 'if the land has a good name many will come here.' Coming a-land on the southwestern coast, he built the house Brattelith (rock-backed), this and Sumburgh Castle in Shetland being the only houses of the Vikings which are still extant. In the next few years Eric founded a colony of two hundred households, and seems to have made a fortune in real estate.

< So we come to the year 999, when Bear Heljulfson, seeking his father's new land-take in Greenland, was driven from his course, and came to a land of beautiful standing timber. Considering that there was not one stick of timber in Iceland or Greenland, his oar-partners were disgusted when he refused to land. When they reached Greenland they got rid of him, and the ship came into the possession of Leif, eldest son of Eric the Red, then aged about nineteen. In the spring of 1000, Eric consented to take command of this ship, and to search for the timbered country; but he was old and fat, and on the way to the vessel his pony crumpled under his weight, crushing his near ankle. 'It is not given to me,' he said, 'to find any more new lands. Leif, you take command.'

Most earnestly he warned Leif against mermaids, unipeds, unicorns, and the deadly peril of sailing over the edge of the flat Earth. So Leif Ericson set forth upon that famous voyage, discovering Stoneland, which is Labrador and Newfoundland, Forestland, which is Nova Scotia, and Wineland the Good, which is New England. The foundations of his trading-post have been discovered at Cambridge in Massachusetts, together with the graves left by the later expeditions of his brother, Thorwald the Helpless, and his brother-in-law, the rich Norse merchant, Thorfin Karlsefne. >

Of Leif's thirsty passage to Nidaros in Norway, of his conversion there to Christianity by King Olaf Tryggvason, of his offer to that great monarch of the throne of a new world, and of his return to Brattelith in Greenland—so much must be passed by. One is tempted to write of his long reign in Greenland, and of his fostering there of poor blind King Rulhig. In the world's long annals there are few men so gentle in character, so glorious in action, so sweet in memory.

< But this brief narrative must follow Thorfin Karlsefne, Asdis his wife, and their sons the first and second bishops of the diocese of Greenland and Wineland. These built their cathedral in Greenland, but their baptistery is the building now known as the Old Mill at Newport in Rhode Island. >

It was a custom of the Norse explorers to leave inscribed stones at the furthest limits of their journeys. One of these was found in Douglas County, Minnesota (reported in 1899); and another is to be seen a little northward of Upernavik in Danish Greenland. Of the fur trade we have no records, but the timber shipments from Wineland supplied the needs of Greenland and Iceland, and the hard woods required by Norway, a business which prospered for about three and a half centuries. Then came a series of disasters. During the Black Death (1348-9) an English squadron raided the colonies of Iceland, Greenland, and possibly Wineland, taking away the able-bodied men as slaves to reap our harvests. On the complaint of the Bishop of Bergen, the Pope ordered the return of these people to their homes, and they were taken back, but left without supplies of food or clothing. Then the Black Death ravaged the colonies; which were so weakened that the Eskimo were able to destroy the western settlement in Greenland. But the culminating horror occurred at Bergen, where the Hanseatic merchants quarrelled with the forty master mariners engaged in the American timber trade, made overtures of peace, invited them to a banquet, and murdered them. After that no man in Europe knew the way to America, but the Icelanders carried on the timber trade with Wineland until 1484. There is even one record of a marriage in the dying colony of Greenland, but the remnant of the colonists turned Eskimo. It is possible that the so-called White Eskimo of Coronation Gulf are descended from men of the lost colony.

< When Columbus came upon the scene there was still a titular Bishop of Greenland and Wineland, resident in Rome. The three

principal maps of the period showed Greenland, Helluland, Markland and Wineland the Good; and Columbus was a cartographer by trade. > Moreover, in 1477, being then master of a little vessel, trading wine for stockfish, he sailed from Bristol and reached Thule (Iceland). As he was a good Latinist, he was able to converse with the Latin-speaking Icelandic gentry, being a guest in houses built of American timber, and meeting men who were still actively engaged in the American lumber trade. In later years he knew that the Earth is a sphere, and a letter from Toscanelli the astronomer gave him its circumference as twenty thousand miles. According to that measurement, Japan would be a little to the southward of Wineland, and to open up trade between Japan and Europe became his life's ambition.

It so happened that Toscanelli had a pupil in astronomy, one Jean Cousin, native of Dieppe. Inspired by the astronomer's knowledge of the Earth, Cousin sailed from Dieppe in January, 1488, and in March of that year discovered the mouths of the Amazons, which he named Maragnon. His second-in-command, the Spaniard Vicente Pinçon, told the story of this great adventure to the Prior of the Convent of La Rabida. Presently there came trailing up the long hill to La Rabida, the weary, destitute and despairing Columbus, attended by his little son, and begging for food and shelter. For twenty years he had been the laughing-stock of Europe. Only the Prior of La Rabida, newly informed as to the existence of Brazil, and former confessor to Queen Isabella, not only took him seriously but gave him a letter of introduction to Her Majesty. And so Columbus came to the army besieging the Moors in Granada, where the soldiers put him to work for three months digging trenches. After that, when he presented his letter the Queen financed him. Moreover, Señor Vicente Pinçon, late of Brazil, sailed as pilot to guide Columbus to the shores of a new land which might be a part of Japan. Even then, although Columbus the cartographer and very bad master mariner, managed to find Watling Island in the Bahamas, and thence to explore the West Indies, it was not he but the cartographer Amerigo Vespucci who charted the New World under his own name as America.

< Who then was the discoverer of America? Here are prior claims of Manco Capac, Hui Shen, *Quetzal-coatl*, Bear of Broadwick coupled with Gudleif, Ari Marson, Gunnbiorn as precursor of Eric the Red, Leif Ericson, and Jean Cousin, not to mention the unnamed Welsh and Irish voyagers. The question rather is: Who

discovered Columbus? Piloted by a man who had been in America, he was the timorous commander of a crew of cowards; and even with the fullest possible authority as Viceroy of the New World, could not prevent his curs from committing atrocious massacres, but actually allowed himself to be marooned as an intolerable nuisance. Such is the piteous figure which has been glorified by advertisement into the principal hero in the world's annals of exploration. The discovery of Columbus as a hero is a much greater wonder than the oft-repeated finding of America.]

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INADEQUACY OF THE ARCHITECT.

BY CHESTER H. JONES, F.S.A.

THE arts, for some reason, have allowed themselves certain privileges which have not been vouchsafed to the other professions and to business. Artists retain their social position while indulging in a laxity of manners and a negligence in their attire which are permitted in no other calling. A certain mystery pervades the unkempt hair of the musician and the shabby clothes of the painter—a mystery which is part of their stock-in-trade, artfully intriguing the innocent lay mind. The architect often admits himself a member of the same clan, with fancy waistcoat or peculiar neck-tie. Witch doctors, in African jungles, practise the same forms of deceit to lure savages into confidence. The bank clerk goes daily to work in a smart black suit, though his pittance be several times smaller than that of the artist. The city business magnate brushes his hair and looks like a gentleman. The lawyer retains a respectable attire which is almost out of date. Their attitude towards the artist's exotic appearance is very rarely one of condescension; it is one of willing acceptance, and it accurately reflects the whole attitude of the lay mind towards the mysteries of art and architecture.

Among artists, though his appearance is the least affected—and in this, perhaps, he is the most subtle—the architect is the chief impostor. O all artists the architect has the greatest influence on our everyday lives. His buildings line the streets which he has failed to plan, and punctuate the countryside which he has failed to save. The alarm-clock, which wakes us in the morning, brings us face to face with his art, and we look upon it till we rewind the alarm-clock in the evening. The works of the painter can be turned to the wall or relegated to the public art gallery; the works of the musician can be left unplayed; but the works of the architect are always with us.

It might be thought that I fail to make a distinction between the good and the bad architect, but this is because I adopt a standard of criticism which has not yet acquired popular esteem, and

which condemns the architect who is usually the most highly praised. The distinction between the good and the bad architect is commonly drawn by those persons who regard art as the peculiar property of their own cultivated and narrow society. They draw the distinction according to the architect's ability to reproduce sound contemporary building. To cultivated society the value of architecture depends upon the pleasant associations which it creates with the romantic past which they have found in literature, in the old parish church, in the cathedrals and châteaux of France, and among the fora of Rome. They have failed entirely to see that these buildings formed a live part of a civilisation and fulfilled a far higher purpose than that of delighting the æsthetic eye of the contemporary tourist. The indifference of the ancients whose works we most admire to the matter of 'art,' however unwilling we may be to accept the fact, is now beyond dispute, and has been amply shown by Mr. Frank P. Chambers in his *Cycles of Taste*. The 'picturesque' was an unknown quantity before an intellectual age warped the æsthetic appreciation of the people, which had hitherto been sublimely unconscious. Ancient buildings have achieved their glamour largely by reason of their age, their ruin, and their historical association, and this, rather than their adequacy to fulfil the requirements of their time, is the criterion by which they are commonly judged. The most essential parts of their structure are regarded as mere ornaments, placed there for sentimental effect. The pure structural form of perfected Gothic architecture is seen only as the emulation of nature. The architectural student returns from his continental tour armed with an elaborate sketch-book of pretty drawings, the subjects of which he looks forward to reproduce in practice centuries after the causes which gave rise to them have disappeared. He has failed entirely to see the art which he has studied in relation to the age which produced it. His greatest ambition is the Prix de Rome, which entails three years' study in the country which has contributed least towards the architecture of our era.

Though the consequence of having the architect in our midst is so acutely felt, he is too rarely criticised. I intend here to criticise him, expose some of the fallacies with which the lay mind has come to surround his profession, and profane the sanctuary in which he has for so long preached his heresies to a trusting audience and with subtle pretence of disinterested philanthropy. No profession has been more successful in hoodwinking the public

for the sake of the financial return than that of architecture in the cause of 'art.'

One would have little consideration for a public so easily hoodwinked were it not for the vast background of hoodwinking to which it has been subjected. A century and more of hoodwinking has predisposed the public to a belief that the inconsistencies with which architecture is commonly surrounded in its attempts to reproduce antiquity are an essential part of it. These inconsistencies, of course, are not incompatible with the mystery with which 'art' is surrounded in the lay mind, and the architect, rather than clear up the mystery, is, according to his mental status, either lost in it himself, learning to profit by it, or cunningly contributing to it. (The mental status of the architect varies from that of the ascendant draughtsman to that of the polished gentleman who has married into a wealthy clientele.) In fact the gentle art of architectural fraud may be found as far back as the fourteenth century, when architecture first began to lose its sincerity and become one of the affectations of an over-educated people. The fourteenth century marked the introduction of learning, and, ever since that period, the art of architecture has declined in direct proportion to the erudition of the age. The nineteenth century marked the climax of learning and the climax of architectural decadence. In a century of unparalleled development in every other field of human endeavour, architecture achieved no more than a weird confusion with archæology. One cannot wonder at the continued influence of so wide a background, culminating, as it did, in the apex of English history. It has established in the attitude of the lay mind towards the art of architecture an ignorance of its true nature whose roots are in the security of Victorian England. It has made the architect a sort of minor potentate of the arts, entitled to command respect for the tyranny which he exerts over his subjects. His subjects fail to see a reason for his enactments, but

'Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die,'

and they obey his precepts as the incontrovertible laws of 'art,' whose reasons are hidden from the uninitiated.

The predisposition of the public to recognise architecture as a mystery beyond their comprehension is easily understood when we consider the wealth of styles, each with its own category of

complicated architectural formulæ, from which the architect has been able to draw as a result of the archæologist's exact investigation into the past. The demand for accuracy of reproduction is a fit expression of the exactitude required by a scientific age if it is not an attribute to art, and the end of the nineteenth century achieved an academic perfection in the ancient styles which commands our admiration. It overcame the capacities of new materials and the inconsistencies arising from new methods of building, with surprising sufficiency. It had evolved a perfection in the Classic and Gothic styles which was final and fit to serve every type of building from cathedral to factory warehouse. The evolution of the revival style, now that every genuine antique model had been completely investigated, measured and published, could go no further.

Even in the second quarter of the succeeding century the principles of the nineteenth have not yet been superseded. The nineteenth century in architecture is now dying a lingering and a painful death. And yet, in politics and invention, these years have been momentous in the world's history. Architecture still takes its place with the study of the dead languages. Steel, concrete and glass, with their tremendous possibilities, bow to the archæologist. America still builds with enthusiasm a bastard architecture of styles which expired centuries ago on the other side of the world. Colleges more medieval than Oxford and Cambridge have arisen, railroad stations with an architecture which Imperial Rome could only have dreamt of, public and commercial buildings which out-column the whole Acropolis of Athens. The skyscraper, even with its eighty floors, succeeds only partially in thwarting the archæologist, and one of the most recent, occupying the only dignified axial site in New York, festoons its upper floors with hanging Corinthian columns and raises a gilded Renaissance cupola among its neighbouring towers. The comic papers writhe with amusement, but the architects are unmoved. In England the same archæological ideals are rigorously maintained, and only an occasional architect and his client dare to build true architecture in the face of contemporary opinion.

A stroll through London will amply illustrate the inadequacy of the architect. London suffers, as it always has suffered, from the English inability to conceive of great scale and great planning. Only at Edinburgh (and that is in Scotland and, no doubt, owes its bigness to Baronial precedent) and at Bath (where are the chief

Roman remains in the country) can any proximation to big city planning be found. Even those meagre individual civic schemes which London has possessed in the past have been rapidly lost sight of in present-day rebuilding. The civic history of London has been one of great opportunities lost, from the failure of Wren's far-sighted plan for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire to the narrow ideas which have characterised the new Charing Cross scheme now under discussion. Of Inigo Jones' conception of a magnificent royal palace at Whitehall only a fragment was ever built, and his unfinished scheme for a residential square at Covent Garden is to-day the abode of wholesale vegetables. Now the Adelphi of Robert Adam is threatened, and it is indeed a matter of speculation as to whether 'civic' architecture will take its place. Yet no city has had greater opportunities than London. Kingsway, running awkwardly into the Aldwych, was built but a few yards off the axis between Waterloo Bridge and the British Museum, the only building in London conceived on a great scale and not as an assembly of little parts, and, peculiarly enough, the only building in London in whose recent additions this great scale has been perpetuated. But the British Museum, which might have faced down a fine avenue to the river, is fronted by small hotels and meagre dwellings. Though Nash's Regent Street was doomed inevitably to rebuilding, it might, in the interests of both commerce and civics, when all the leases expired at the same time, have been rebuilt as a splendid civic scheme on the principle of the former street, but it became a collection of conflicting store fronts, each concerned only with architectural magnificence for the purpose of advertising at the expense of its neighbours. This is the negation of civic architecture. Only in the Quadrant formed by the street as it enters Piccadilly Circus was any uniform façade found possible, and, even then, it was in a part of the street where it could be least appreciated. But the Quadrant, despite the influence of Norman Shaw's competent, though pompous and impracticable, section, is but a tame and ill-studied reflection of the English Renaissance. London, to-day, is confronted, once more, with tremendous possibilities, and the next few years will show to what extent they are appreciated. The removal of Charing Cross Station to the south side of the river makes possible a magnificent approach, on the site of the present terminus, to a bridge axial with the new station. It gives immense opportunity for the relief of traffic congestion, and, above all, suggests the building of a southern

embankment, similar to the Victoria Embankment, and the formation of a modern residential area within a stone's throw of the heart of the City, with adequate bridge approaches. Modern apartment houses fronting on such an embankment would command a panoramic view across the river of the north bank from Westminster to the Tower—a comprehensive history of London, and a situation unequalled in any city.

It is customary to blame the lay mind for every æsthetic misfortune which mars the beauty of our cities, and the professional journals attain their most eloquent passages in their condemnation of the narrow, bourgeois mind of the people. Myself I have great faith in the wisdom of the multitude and am firmly convinced that it is their willingness to be dictated to by the architect which is chiefly responsible for the architectural decadence which to-day surrounds us. Those who are unprejudiced by the intensive training which the architect receives in the arts of antiquity and are at the same time closely in touch with the world's affairs, are the best judges of architecture. For this very reason the taste of the medical man, as evidence in his home surroundings, shows an unaffected reality which shames the clap-trap museum exhibits among which the architect will happily reside. The architect has become the archæologist's protégé. The centuries of beneficent education to which the architect has in his turn subjected an all-too-willing laity have had their greatest influence in destroying its natural common sense and good taste, so that it is, more often than not, a willing accomplice in his architectural conceits. It is very rarely that this innate common sense condemns the absurdity of our twentieth-century columned façades and traceried windows. Still more rarely does it thwart the dilettantism of the architect and his followers and produce honest architecture. The business concern is either persuaded that the columns are necessary for its self-respect in the interests of 'art,' or it welcomes them as architecture's only medium of advertisement.

The attitude of the architect is admirably illustrated by an article contributed not long ago to one of the professional journals on the subject of shop fronts. The contributor illustrated two shop façades of equal frontage and of about six floors in height, in both of which the shop window was contained in an arch in the ground floor. In one the arch was considerably smaller at the expense of the shop window, so as to give a greater breadth of stone facing on either side. This façade, argued the contributor, was archi-

tecturally the better because it gave a much greater supporting surface to the stonework above. It was indeed to be regretted, he continued, that business concerns were so selfishly interested in obtaining the maximum area for window-display space that they would not allow any generosity in the cause of architecture—as he understood it, let us add. Such an attitude completely disregarded the fact that the stonework was no more than a veneer to steel construction, and that the arch was entirely ornamental. The mind of the contributor was back in the days when stone was the supporting material, and he was insisting that it should still appear so even as a veneer to steel construction. The absurdity of such criticism is too apparent to need further comment. The business concern should rightly have demanded a plate-glass show-space covering the entire frontage if such were its requirements, and modern methods of construction could easily have met such a demand. It is contrary to all the precedent which is most admired to build other than with the best and most economical materials obtainable as efficiently as we know how for contemporary needs. Only with such an intent has the greatest architecture been built in the past, and only with such an intent can great architecture be built to-day and in the future.

In a recent study of the history of the architect which seems to be motivated largely from a desire to improve his present-day status by illustrating his prestige in the past, an architect has remarked upon the fact that Cicero built 'at least twenty-one houses in his lifetime.' 'But,' the author continues, 'as he employed five different architects, one may infer that he was not an easy man to deal with.' It is significant of the attitude of the profession that this author should not have drawn the equally likely deduction that Cicero's architects, rather than Cicero himself, were not easy to deal with!

The architectural profession has shown a disdain for the lay opinion which has little justification, and the peevish cry of the architect at what he may consider some act of æsthetic vandalism is quite unwarranted by his own accomplishments when given 'the free hand,' which is his highest satisfaction. 'The free hand' constitutes a freedom to indulge in any of his pet artistic idiosyncrasies at the client's expense and without the client's criticism. The absurdity of the client who desires some specific type of building and permits his architect 'a free hand' is a common privilege allowed the mysterious Mother Art. In no other human need will

the purchaser willingly submit to being supplied with an article other than that which he specifically requires. His philanthropy, if he will only see it, is no more than a concession to the vanity of the architect, and, if he will examine the pretty product with which he is supplied with an eye to its efficiency rather than its all-too-debatable beauty, he will find that his charity has proved neither profitable to himself nor, let us add, in the interests of true architecture.

Honest, truly contemporary architecture in London has reached the surface in only a very few examples, but it may be found underground in the tube railways. The Tube railway station beneath Piccadilly Circus is one of the best pieces of modern architecture in London. Descending the escalators—true architecture and unspoilt by ‘artistic design’—one may find, in the trains themselves, the essence of what honest architecture should be. Low, cylindrical forms of clean, brightly lit and comfortable cars, slipping easily out from cylindrical tunnels like the cartridge in the barrel of a gun, and gliding to a stop with the least sound of mechanical power, the author admits that, after visiting the principal monuments of recent architecture in London and finding very little of interest, he watched several trains pass through the station before he entered one. They are low because experience has shown that a low centre of gravity gives a surer grip of the rails. The cars are cylindrical because they thereby fit the tunnels and secure the maximum interior accommodation for the passengers. The tunnels and the stations are cylindrical because that is the way in which they are the most easily constructed in the soft London clay. The cars are clean, bright and comfortable because thereby they attract the patronage of travellers. The watchword of their design has been ‘efficiency,’ from the curve of the automatic doors, following the line of the cars, and the sure movement with which they open and close, to the rhythmic repetition of the interesting scoop of the ventilators on the roof—strange, sweeping shapes, undoubtedly secured by exact scientific investigation. They are, indeed, the real product of modern times, unharmed by the archaeological prejudices of the architect, but the product of genuine engineering or architectural (the words are synonymous) skill. The same principle is illustrated in all the company’s lettering, designed from the standpoint of legibility, and in their posters, which have already acquired fame for their excellence. The tube railway companies, freed from dilettantism, and interested, as they

should be, solely in the maintenance of an efficient organisation, are far greater benefactors of the cause of architecture than the architectural institutes whose members have expended years in the study of their art and the procreation of their knowledge among unthinking students. The same alliance between utility and form will be found in the evolution of the buses of the London General Omnibus Company. In fact, in the motor-car, whose evolution has been a live and vigorous part of our civilisation, will be found honest design which puts architecture to shame.

We will have true contemporary architecture only when both architect and client realise that it must be admittedly the product of the age.

TO A VERY ANCIENT ANCESTOR.

WHEN the Dinosaurus wandered o'er the plains of Colney Hatch,
 In your hut of mud and branches with its roof of well-worn thatch,
 What knew you of rates and taxes, wayward therm, or doctor's fee,
 Or the music that a plumber plays on fittings h. and c. ?
 Telephones did not insult your well-earned after-dinner snooze,
 Nor a wireless set that bellowed quite unnecessary news.
 Just a simple life you followed, simply, as a savage can, . . .
 Lucky man !

When rhinoceroses gambolled on the heights of Cricklewood
 You would do a little hunting as a well-bred savage should ;
 Then your homestead was your castle, not besieged by Con. or Lib.
 Canvassers who hoped to win you with some ancient worn-out fib ;
 You weren't worried with the problem whether we should tax our
 bets,
 Or with higher mathematics about other countries' debts.
 Simple was the life you followed, moulded on a simple plan, . . .
 Lucky man !

When wild packs of wolves were scampering up and down the
 Edgware Road
 You just loafed about the forest clad in but a suit of woad ;
 Neither did your wife develop, lured by dreams of silken frills,
 Horrid habits of acquiring large pernicious-looking bills ;
 You had not to sit and listen to the curate's latest tale,
 Then give up your favourite trousers to the local jumble-sale.
 No. A simple life you followed, unrestrained by Fashion's ban, . . .
 Lucky man !

Would that I had met the reindeer wandering down Oxford Street !
 Would that I had seen the bison by the willowed banks of Fleet !
 Would that I had hunted with you in the swamps around West Ham
 (Where to-day they manufacture pickles, lingerie, and jam),
 But I didn't, . . . and between us loom the countless brimming
 years,
 So that I can but imagine all your laughter and your tears, . . .
 You, who never heard wild motors hooting through the haunts of
 Pan, . . .
 Lucky man ! Lucky man !

A. R. U.

HOURS IN UNDRESS.

VI. NOVELS.

My three favourite novels to-day are *Vanity Fair*, *The Pariah*, and *The Forsyte Saga*. The first and second are by old Cornhill men: Thackeray was editing this magazine seventy years ago, and its serial novel in 1883 was *The Giant's Robe* by Mr. Anstey. Allured by the author of *Vice Versa*, which I knew by heart in that year, I remember trying *The Giant's Robe*, but I must confess for that early period a less exquisite taste in fiction. It was then that my sister and I used to gallop through our mother's review copies of forgotten 'three-deckers' in an hour and a half between us. More time could not be stolen for the delight, so we drew lots who should read the volumes as one, two, three, or two, three, one. The loser often had more thrills than the winner. That joy passed, and after the dawn of maturer judgment, such as it was, and before the appearance of Mr. Galsworthy's masterpiece, my third choice would have been divided between *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and *John Halifax, Gentleman*. There is no order in this preference, and for a seventh favourite I would mention *Cranford*, which I still re-read once a year. But it is a set of sketches rather than a novel, and, save for Dickens, increasing our debt to him, it would have stopped short at Chapter II.

May I add just one word about Mr. Anstey? In the essays on *The Eighteen-Eighties*¹ which Mr. Walter de la Mare has delicately edited for the Royal Society of Literature, Mr. Forrest Reid expresses our surprise that *The Pariah*, 'an admirable novel, standing far above the average fiction both of its day and of ours,' has attracted less notice than it deserves. 'It was not what was expected' (from the creator of Paul Bultitude), he adds, 'and therefore probably aroused disappointment.' I fancy the mishap was even harsher. *The Giant's Robe*, which preceded *The Pariah*, by giving rise to a charge of plagiarism, had unjustly dimmed its author's fame. Unrestrained by Mr. Anstey's natural shrinking, I have read Follett Synge's *Tom Singleton*, with which it was compared, and which was published a few years before it, and the resemblance in places is obvious; so obvious, indeed, as either to

¹ Cambridge, 1930.

acquit the younger writer or to convict him of blunder as well as crime. For if he had the nerve to borrow the plot, he would have had the wit to avoid the episodes. What seems to have happened is that two novelists, moving in much the same circle, came in contact with the same idea, in a newspaper reference or the like, and, working independently, agreed in one or two details (a more improbable tale is told of the Septuagint translators). Unfortunately, this evidence to originality was mistaken in some quarters as a sign of copying, and Mr. Anstey's next (and, alas! his only other) long novel suffered accordingly in public esteem. It is an old story now, but it is never too late to tell the truth.

Out of the seven books named above, it will be observed that the first three are by men and the next four by women. Without hazarding an inference from this fact, which is probably purely accidental, it would be ungallant not to note that the birth-years of the four are (*Pride and Prejudice*) 1813, (*Jane Eyre*) 1837, (*Cranford*) 1853, and (*John Halifax*) 1857. Thus, the feminist triumph in the twentieth century was won in the first half of the nineteenth, for no one can seriously doubt that Miss Austen, the Brontë sisters, Mrs. Gaskell and Mrs. Craik would have been equal to the burden of the franchise, with whatever consequences it might entail, and Miss Elizabeth Haldane, in her new life of the other Elizabeth, is fully entitled to her laugh at the capacious pocket of the Rev. Professor Gaskell, who allowed his wife a trifle out of her literary earnings for purposes of her own. There may be no pockets in ladies' dresses to-day, but there is a Married Women's Property Act. It is difficult, too, to resist a smile at the recollection of Sir Henry Craik, Dinah Mulock's fine old Tory brother-in-law, who was still protesting in the House of Commons in 1918 that the female franchise would be injurious. They might write novels in the reign of Queen Victoria, but not mark a voting-paper in that of King George V.

No safe inference can be drawn, however, as to novelists and sex. Some of the worst novels have been written by women, and the most sustained efforts in fiction have been kept at a higher level by men—Scott and Dickens, for example. George Eliot has an effect of difficulty, and her better books are much better than her less good; and a voluminous writer like Miss Braddon is not in the first class. But this does not necessarily mean less staying power. The room of her own which Miss Virginia Woolf has written about with so much humour and charm was a male, not a female,

appurtenance, and we have still to see the effect on productiveness of a habit of professionalism among women. The seven suggest another kind of generalisation. Perhaps *Cranford* should be omitted, as not exactly a novel; but, taking the remaining six together, can any common factors be found in them, which might account for, if not justify, my choice? They are all middle class; they all possess domestic interiors, they all proceed to adventure in their own kind. These three attributes seem important, not in the least as determining my taste, but as characterising prominent specimens of English fiction over a period of more than a hundred years, from the time of the Bennets to that of the Forsytes. The adventure of the Forsytes, as a fact, extends over the whole century, and in the marriage of Fleur to Michael Mont, with its hints of an ignored social difference, we see the victory of the forces which made her great-great-grandfather build his houses well, in the generation when old Osborne and old Sedley, or their parents, were likewise, and not much more consciously, moving towards Vanity Fair. Indeed, I have fancied a likeness, as is only natural in their time and place, between Mrs. John Sedley and Mrs. James Forsyte. The former is old enough to be the latter's mother, and perhaps she may have been an aunt: the Forsyte tree does not stretch to collaterals. But the main period of the Saga is the eighteen-eighties, and the chief adventurer is typified in Soames, who resists and assists at once—resists by personal shyness and a public quality which I can only describe as the converse of enthusiasm; assists by personal probity and the public quality which enables his kind to get on—the gradual emergence of the middle class into the centre of the English scene.

The degree in which these attributes are combined, and the emphasis laid upon them, differ in the several books. But the middle-class family at home, in a house with open windows, is common to each. Moreover, there is climbing in each, and, therefore, there are hills; and the *mappa mundi* of English fiction, if I may attempt a generalisation, is distinct in that respect from the flatness of some varieties on the Continent. We shall come back to this distinction along another route. Here I would illustrate the discovery of the middle-class family at home by a quotation from the last Saturday sermon published in *The Times* newspaper in 1930. Its writer on December 27 said that

‘Loyalty to family life has been a tradition of the Anglo-Saxon

race. As members of that race the home has been the centre of Englishmen's affections and the dominant influence in their lives. It has been to them a school of virtue, a harbour of refuge from the world, a sphere of fellowship, and a shrine of worship.'

We need not keep too closely to this text, which was not written of English novels, but these, surely, reflect the dominant influence on the nation's life. David Copperfield, the boy without a home, thrust out of it, remembering it, seeking a substitute for it; John Halifax, making a home and therefore founding a family; the young ladies of the early nineteenth century, confined to home, yet multiplying its conditions; poor Allen Chadwick, worshipping at the shrine; Forsyte 'Change on the Bayswater Road, a harbour of refuge from the world—again and again the text is justified. And we may concur further with the writer in counting as a 'ground of grave concern' the loosening of home ties in recent years.

'New conditions,' [he says] 'social, political, and economical, may compel still greater changes in our family life, but unless its essential elements are preserved we must go down in confusion. No community can prosper where the home is not the centre of affection, fellowship, service, and faith. Without its protective discipline men must lose the springs of self-sacrificing service, in which the weak are protected and the strong are prepared for their larger duties in the world.'

When this happens, a motive of fiction, of great value and interest, will disappear.

The history of the novel is a long story, which is not so continuous as it is sometimes made to appear. That is to say, there is not a steady progress from the earliest novel to the last. Different kinds of fiction sprang on different soils. Some were successfully transplanted. Some perished where they rose. A good instance of transplantation occurred about four hundred years ago, when King Francis I of France was a prisoner of the Spaniards (1525-6). He mitigated his exile by reading the romances of Amadis of Gaul. These, as a branch of the Arthur-legend, had found their way from Wales to the Peninsula, where they were worked up by half a dozen writers into a dozen books of amorous courtly tales. King Francis, brother to Margaret of Navarre, the reputed author of the *Heptameron*, and himself a patron of letters, had already sought to make Paris a new Florence of the Renaissance, and, on his return to his capital, he added the spoils of Madrid. At his instance, or in con-

sequence of his wish, Nicholas Herberay des Essarts translated two-thirds of the bulky *Amadis*, and, with the remaining four books by another hand, Paris was provided in 1540-8 with the complete cycle of its romances. The King's sense of his subjects' taste was proved by the expansion of the material on French soil. The adventures of love and chivalry were eagerly amplified, till in all about five-and-twenty books were available, and this development, says a learned German, who is not likely to be wrong, 'marks the birth of the modern political and heroic novel.'¹ It shows how oddly such things happen.

This French novel of the seventeenth century had a profound influence in Europe. The principal specimen of its kind, the *Grand Cyrus* (1649-53) of Mlle. de Scudéry, contained 6,679 closely printed pages. Lately, it has seemed that the long novel is coming into its own again: *Angel Pavement*, *Imperial Palace*, and other instances occur. But modern novelists have still some way to go before they repeat la Scudéry's successful record. The *Amadis* type of fiction did not return on its track through France back to Britain. Indeed, it was rather as a protest against its atmosphere and environment that English novelists (and playwrights) went to lower life and fresher air in the next century. Take the following names and dates, for example:

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719.

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726.

Lillo's *George Barnwell*, 1731.

Richardson's *Pamela*, 1740.

It was a very remarkable score of years, and we have high authority for the statement, that, in literature,

'In this period, and in this alone, England did not receive, but give. It was in England that the movement started, which, under different forms in each country, gave fresh life to the literature of Europe. It was in England the seed was sown, the harvest of which was reaped during the next half-century by all the nations of Europe, and the last fruits of which have even yet perhaps not been fully gathered in.'²

Here, then, from the historian's point of view, we have a new beginning, and another reminder of the discontinuousness in the history of fiction. A 'movement started,' a 'seed was sown,' and 'fresh life' was imparted to literature. Perhaps we should still

¹ Koerting, *Geschichte des französischen Romans im siebzehnten Jahrhundert*.

² Professor C. Vaughan, *Warton Lecture on English Poetry*, 1913.

be careful not to insist too strongly on the innovation. The story of the detective novel reminds us that what seems new may be a refurbishing of methods familiar in olden times. There were eyes in the *Arabian Nights* which were as keen almost as those of Sherlock Holmes. They could detect from the imprint of hooves in the sand of the desert the changes in a camel's burden at various stages of its journey, and there is ample evidence to show that a sense of the value of inference from observation came to the West from the East. But, all allowances made, English novelists in the first half of the eighteenth century did help considerably to rebuild the foundations of fiction for modern Europe; and when Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and *Sentimental Journey* were available by 1768, the preparation was complete. Even Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* some years later was partly an apprentice to these masters.

I turn for a moment to drama for the sake of another sentence from Professor Vaughan. Writing of the French bourgeois tragedy, for which Lillo in England had supplied the chief model, he remarks that one of its characteristics 'was to send the Princes and Princesses into banishment, and to fill their places with plain men and women.' Now, transfer that perception to fiction. What were the titles, for example, of the leading French novels of the seventeenth century? *Le Grand Cyrus*, *Cléopâtre*, *L'Adroite Princesse*, *Prince Muguet et Princesse Zaza*, *La Princesse de Clèves*, etc. These princes and princesses, too, with all their exotic company, were to be sent packing together. All the conventions which they had elaborated for the protection of their mad universe could not do a hand's turn for Robinson Crusoe nor alleviate the lot of Lemuel Gulliver: Defoe denuded man, at a stroke, of the insignia of civilised being, and threw him, bare and unprovided, on an inhospitable, uninhabited island. Swift stripped him, flake by flake, of the artificial coverings of civilisation, which had been the pride and ambition of the age and Court of Louis XIV, and left him to the contempt of the Houyhnhnms, unfit for the society of decent horses. And, when the satirists had done their work, as nearly as possible two hundred years ago, old Samuel Richardson, the printer, was invited by Rivington and Osborne, members of his own trade, presumably familiar with its requirements,

'to write for them a little volume of *Letters*, in a common style, on such subjects as might be of use to those country readers who were unable to write for themselves.'

The style, the subject and the audience—three essential ingredients of a 'best-seller'—were all clearly laid down. The princes and princesses were dismissed, and their places were filled with plain men and women; the style was to be common, not romantic, and the topics were to be suitable, not for *salons*, but for the countryside. Real people with present problems were admitted, or readmitted, to fiction, and

'there is so much of truth and nature in the conduct of the story, that we may have perfect confidence in the anecdote told by Sir John Herschel of the blacksmith of a village, who read *Pamela* to his neighbours collected round his anvil. When the hero and heroine were brought together to live long and happily, according to the most approved rules, the congregation were so delighted as to raise a great shout, and, procuring the church keys, actually set the parish bells ringing.'¹

Dickens knew no greater triumph.

Briefly, perhaps, we may say that Robinson Crusoe captured Germany, Pamela captured France, and George Barnwell captured both. At any rate, the historians observe a big flow of adventure-books in the Fatherland, immediately after 1720, expressly known as 'Robinsonaden' (Robinsoniads). They note, too—indeed, it is famous—the grave Diderot's apostrophe to Richardson: 'If I have to sell all my books, I will keep thee and place thee on the same shelf as Moses, Homer, Sophocles and Euripides'; and they are aware how the influence of George Lillo and Edward Moore, in reclaiming the social milieu of the English stage from the company kept by the Restoration dramatists, was communicated to Continental playwrights. Lessing in Germany and Diderot, again, in France were among the greater dramatists who founded in their own countries the fate-drama, as it was called, which displayed a specific spell or curse, or even a special date or emblem, affecting the fortunes of a family. Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity* (1736), with its prologue by Fielding ('From lower life we draw our scene's distress'), was the starting-point for this genre, which helped to swell the flood of common tears released by Richardson in fiction. The *drame larmoyante* was sisterly to the weeping novel.

But more important to us than their imitators on the Continent was the popularity of these books at home. Everyone knows the closeness of the affinity between Richardson and Fielding, and the hundred years from *Tom Jones* to *David Copperfield* (1749–1849)

¹ C. Knight, *Shadows of the Old Booksellers*.

were the golden century of middle-class fiction. It is the reader's advantage that the author in that class depends on his own resources. The history in an historical novel may cramp an author's style, particularly if the reader knows much about it, but at least it supplies him with some sort of plot, characters and background. So, too, the mystery in a detective novel puts a set of stock characters at his disposal (there must be the criminal, the victim, and the investigator, as well as a boxful of clues), and to that extent relieves him of inventing them. But the domestic novelist starts with a clean sheet. Kings and cardinals are not his stock-in-trade, nor is it his sole object to hang his hero. His readers come to him for a new tale, a *novella*, and would be properly annoyed if they were put off with less. There must be a knot or tangle to untie, and they do not want to solve it out of history-books, nor do they want its solution to close their interest in the book. They like to have their curiosity stimulated even to the point of 'looking at the end,' but they like the satisfaction of that curiosity to increase their pleasure in reaching it at the appointed time. Thus, they pay the author a double compliment: to his plot, and to his characters; and the more genuine this compliment, the more often the book will be re-read. Note, too, that the characters must be idealised. There is literary as well as legal cause for warning novelists not to depict living people. The disclaimer now prefixed to many novels is not merely good in law, but it helps to reassure readers that the people in the book are original creations. There is nothing new under the sun, but as every 'hand' dealt at Bridge is a new mixture of the cards in the pack, so every domestic novel is a new selection and combination of episodes and chances in human life.

Success in this kind of fiction depends on what is called truth to life. Nothing must be too improbable for illusion, not even coincidence itself, which is often more daring than its picture. But worse than the improbable is the commonplace, and there came gradually into existence in the nineteenth century a set of novelists' models, who were almost as wooden and unlikely as the dummies in cash-tailors' show-windows. They were like cards laid face downwards on the table: there was no fun in the interplay of character. The explorer who was reported dead, but who had really been a prisoner of savages, and who came home either to find his wife re-married, or to fall in love with the niece of his fiancée (the niece being the image of what she was, and she being

faded, though faithful), and the good, dull, neighbouring squire (or it might be a widowed clergyman), who had adored the patient aunt all the time, but had not encroached on her maidenly memories, and now gratefully accepts the explorer's derelict: this was one of the stock themes of the Frankfort Moores and other late Victorians; and from the opening chapter, where the merry niece surprises her tranquil aunt's sacred secret, we used to know exactly what would happen. *Ex Africa nunquam aliquid novi*: there was no 'novel' out of exploration in Africa. Another favourite was the failure of a country bank. Its *loci classici* are *John Halifax* and *Cranford*; and, later, in the hands of lesser masters, every move in the game could be foretold. It was a serious loss to fiction when the joint-stock banks lessened depositors' risks. This laziness in invention, which substituted reach-me-downs for new models, conspired with the growing revolt from Victorian reticence to make the typical English novel old-fashioned. There could be no truth to life, when the life was copied at second-hand from earlier writers' representation of it, and when the new criticism avouched that the greater part of life was sex. The other day I bought in Berlin and destroyed on the road to Brussels a truly Priapean novel, printed in English and bearing the name of a well-known English author. It would, I believe, have brought a blush to the Booksellers' Row of olden times. But, apart from such extreme examples, which are unlikely to be saleable in this country, whoever is Home Secretary, there is no doubt that Freudian psychology and frankness about babies have helped to make the suppressions in English novels (old style) more obvious than their expressiveness. Asterisks, of course, are out of date, but *ars est celare partem*, and it should not be necessary to strip her to the skin in order to expose an adventuress. Thackeray, after all, was as good an artist as Mr. Somerset Maugham, whose *Cakes and Ale* employs this cruder method, and he contrived to satisfy us of Becky's guilt.

Going back to Fielding for a moment, we may recall what Scott said of him in 1822, in the epistle introductory to the *Fortunes of Nigel*:

'Fielding had high notions of the dignity of an art which he may be considered as having founded. He challenged a comparison between the Novel and the Epic. Smollett, Le Sage, and others . . . have written rather a history of the miscellaneous adventures which befall an individual in the course of his life, than the plot of

a regular and connected epopeia, where every step brings us a step nearer to the final catastrophe.'

And we may recall, too, from Thackeray's *Pendennis* (1850):

'Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost powers a man. We must drape him, and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art.'

In this short jury of his peers, Fielding gets a verdict in his favour. We note, first, that the 'history of the miscellaneous adventures which befall an individual in the course of his life' is known, technically, as a picaresque novel, after the rogue, or *pícaro* of Spain, where the roads rolled under sunshine to the sea. The genre had a long vogue in Europe, and is commonly said to have been killed by the railways, which diverted traffic from the roads and travellers from the inns. The more magnificent revival of the highways to-day may still sublimate the *pícaro*. Secondly, we observe that Thackeray, in the middle of the last century, was beginning to feel the pressure of Victorian elegance. A little later, when, as we saw, invention flagged, the author of *Tom Jones* was buried even deeper, and 'the Natural,' expelled by 'Society,' was imported from foreign factories of 'naturalism.' Zola came in, and Russian types of irresolution seemed to flatten the landscape of English fiction to a uniform monotony of fate. A do-nothing, melancholy creed, partly traceable to Hamlet's soliloquies, but comprising the bequest of long-ago Oriental ancestors to the Empire of Peter the Great, drew the cry from a line of novel heroes:

'How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world.'

Prince Mirsky, writing of Oblomov, perhaps the most characteristic of the lot, says that 'the inevitable doom of the *unfit* man is developed (by Goncharov) with a cunning and unerring hand.' We remember in a recent *Punch* cartoon how a youth of the present generation assured his Victorian parent that he had to spend so much time and money on sport in order to keep fit. 'Fit for what?' came the baffling query; and 'unfit for what?' we are inclined to ask, as we wonder if Oblomov's destiny was properly read by Peter. But this conflict of Slavophil and Westerniser, though not without influence on fiction, would lead us far from our theme.

Stick to the Richardsonian last, is still not a bad motto for

English novelists. 'The provision which we have made here is no other than Human Nature,' Fielding wrote at the beginning of *Tom Jones*, and novels built to his specification, with the necessary external modifications from age to age, seem best to resist devouring time. Character without plot does not make a novel, however profound its study of psychology; plot without character does not make one, however ingenious its mechanical complex; and, judging from the evidence of our law-courts, if we may not trust our unsupported judgment, the climate, or the cooking, or the sea, or a combination of local conditions, keeps Englishmen from a sex-obsession. Novels concentrated thereon are drawn to a wrong scale in this country. If all these propositions are correct, which is perhaps an unlikely conjunction, then the kind of novel represented by the six or seven that I happen to like best would seem to deploy most successfully, and in a form which will endure, the particular qualities which strengthened its English makers about two hundred years ago to resist its twofold disintegration by blue-stockings in French *salons* and by rogues on Spanish roads.

LAURIE MAGNUS.

LITERARY ACROSTICS.

A LITERARY Acrostic is published every month, and the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 91.

'There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full voiced quire below,
In ——— high, and ——— clear.'

1. 'There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep ———, and music in its roar.'
2. 'It is my wedding-day,
And all the world would stare,
If wife should dine at ———,
And I should dine at Ware.'
3. 'I can weather the ——— gale
That ever wind did blow.'
4. 'Yet Ah, that Spring should ——— with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!'
5. 'Tears, ——— tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart.'
6. 'Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this ——— doth owe.'
7. 'Thou art my life, my love, my heart,
The very ——— of me:
And hast command of every part,
To live and die for thee.'

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page viii of 'Book Notes' in the preliminary pages of this issue; and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.
4. Solvers should not write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
6. Answers to Acrostic No. 91 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and must arrive not later than March 20. No answers will be opened before this date.

ANSWER TO No. 90.

1. D	aisie	S
2. I	te	M
3. D	romi	O
4. R	ome	O
5. U	nkindes	T
6. N	ig	H

PROEM: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, i, 1.

LIGHTS:

1. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v, 2.
2. *Twelfth Night*, i, 5.
3. *The Comedy of Errors*, v, 1.
4. *Romeo and Juliet*, v, 3.
5. *Julius Cæsar*, iii, 2.
6. *As You Like It*, ii, 7.

Acrostic No. 89 ('Happy Bells'): The prizes are taken by Rev. W. Brooke, Seaford House, 9 Queen's Road, Felixstowe, and Miss K. L. Carpenter, 21 Waterlow Court, Hampstead Garden Suburb, N.W.11; these two solvers will choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue.

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